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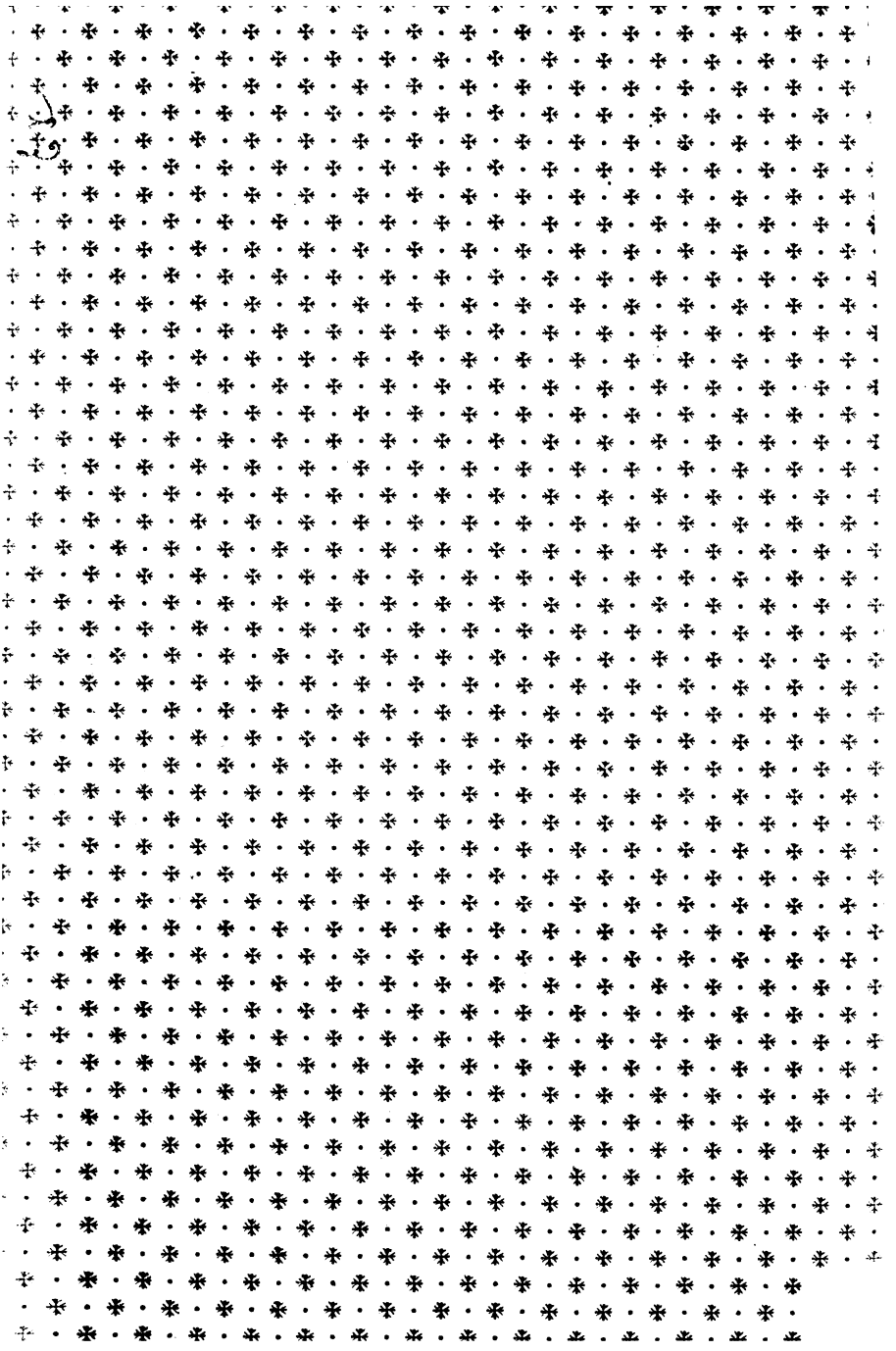

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THE TWINS AND HEART.

THE TWINS:

A DOMESTIC NOVEL.

BY MARTIN FARQUHAR TUPPER,

AUTHOR OF

"PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY."

NEW-YORK:
WILEY & PUTNAM, 161 BROADWAY.

1846.

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THE TWINS

CHAPTER I.

Place: Time: Circumstance.

BURLEIGH-SINGLETON is a pleasant little watering-place on the southern coast of England, entirely suitable for those who have small incomes, and good consciences. The latter, to residents especially, are at least as indispensable as the former: seeing that, however just the reputation of their growing little town for superior cheapness in matters of meat and drink, its character in things regarding men and manners is quite as undeniable for preëminent dulness.

Not but that it has its varieties of scene, and more or less of circumstances too: there are, on one flank, the breezy Heights, with flagstaff and panorama; on the other, broad and level water-meadows, skirted by the dark-flowing Mullet running to the sea between its tortuous banks: for neighborhood, Pacton Park is one great attraction, the pretty market-town of Eyemouth another, the everlasting never-tiring sea a third; and, at high summer, when the Devonshire lanes are not knee-deep in mire, the nevertheless immeasurably filthy, though picturesque, mud-built village of Oxton.

Then again (and really as I enumerate these multitudinous advantages, I begin to relent for having called it dull), you may pick up curious agate pebbles on the beach, as well as corallines and scarce seaweeds, good for gumming on front-parlor windows; you may fish *for* whitings in the bay, and occasionally catch them; you may wade in huge caoutchouc boots among the muddy shallows of the Mullet, and shoot *at* cormorants and curlews; you may walk to satiety between high-banked and rather dirty

cross-roads; and if you will scramble up the hedge-row, may get now and then peeps of undulated country landscape.

Moreover, you have free liberty to drop in anywhere to "tiffin," —Burleigh being very Indianized, and a guest always welcome; indeed so Indianized is it, so populous in jaundiced cheeks and ailing livers, that you may openly assert, without fear of being misunderstood (if you wish to vary your common phrase of loyalty), that Victoria sits upon the "musnud" of Great Britain; you may order curry in the smallest pot-house, and still be sure to get the rice well cooked; you may call your housemaid "ayah," without risk of warning for impertinence; you may vent your wrath against indolent waiters in the eloquence of "jaa, soostee;" and, finally, you may go to the library, and besides the advantage of the day before yesterday's Times, you may behold in bilious presence an affable but authoritative old gentleman who introduces himself, "Sir, you see in me the hero of Puttymuddyfudgepoor."

You may even now see such an one, I say, and hear him too, if you will but go to Burleigh; seeing he has by this time overlived the year or so whereof our tale discourses. He has, by dint of service, attained to the dignity of General H. E. I. C. S., and—which he was still longer coming to,—the wisdom of being a communicative creature; though possibly, by a natural reaction, at present he carries anti-secresy a little too far, and verges on the gossiping extreme. But, at the time to which we must look back to commence this right instructive story, General Tracy was still drinking "Hodgson's Pale" in India, was so taciturn as to be considered almost dumb, and had not yet lifted up his yellow visage upon Albion's white cliffs, nor taken up head-quarters in his final rest of Burleigh-Singleton.

Nevertheless, with reference to quartering at Burleigh, a certain long-neglected wife of his, Mrs. Tracy, had; and that for the period of at least the twenty-one years preceding: how and wherefore I proceed to tell.

A common case and common fate was that of Mrs. Tracy. She had married, both early and hastily, a gallant lieutenant, John George Julian Tracy, to wit, the military germ of our future general; their courtship and acquaintance previous to matrimony extended over the not inconsiderable space of three whole weeks,

commencing with a country ball; and after marriage, honeymoon inclusive, they lived the life of cooing doves for three whole months.

And now came the furlough's end: Mr. Tracy, in his then habitual reserve (a quiet man was he), had concealed its existence altogether: and for aught Jane knew, the hearty invalid was to remain at home for ever: but months soon slip away; and so it came to pass, that on a certain next Wednesday he must be on his way back to the Presidency of Madras, and,—if she will not follow him,—he must leave her.

However, there was a certain old relative, one Mrs. Green, a childless widow, rich, capricious, and infirm, whom Jane Tracy did not wish to lose sight of: her money was well worth both watching and waiting for; and the captain, whom a lucky chance had now lifted out of the lieutenantcy, was easily persuaded to forego the pleasure of his wife's company till the somewhat indefinite period of her old aunt's death.

How far sundry discoveries made in the unknown regions of each other's temper reconciled him to this retrograding bachelorship, and her to her widowhood-bewitched, I will not undertake to say: but I will hazard the remark, anti-poor-law though it seemeth, that the separation of man and wife, however convenient, lucrative, or even mutually pleasant, is a dereliction of duty, which always deserves, and generally meets its proper and discriminative punishment. Had the young wife faithfully performed her Maker's bidding, and left all other ties unstrung to cleave unto her lord; had she considered a husband's true affections before all other wealth, and resolved to share his dangers, to solace his cares, to be his blessing through life, and his partner even unto death, rather than selfishly to seek her own comfort, and consult her own interest,—the tale of crime and sadness, which it is my lot to tell, would never have had truth for its foundation.

Ill-matched for happiness though they were, however well-matched as to mutual merit, the common man of pleasure and the frivolous woman of fashion, still the wisest way to fuse their minds to union, the likeliest receipt for moral good and social comfort, would have been this course of foreign scenes, of new faces, sprinkled with a seasoning of adventure, hardship, danger, in a

distant land. Gradually would they have learned to bear and forbear; the petty quarrel would have been forgotten in the frequent kindness; the rougher edges of temper and opinion would insensibly have smoothed away; new circumstances would have brought out better feelings under happier skies; old acquaintances, false friends forgotten, would have neutralized old feuds: and, by long-living together, though it were perhaps amid various worries and many cares, they might still have come to a good old age with more than average happiness, and more than the common run of love. Patience in dutiful enduring brings a sure reward: and marriage, however irksome a constraint to the foolish and the gay, is still so wise an ordinance, that the most ill-assorted couple imaginable will unconsciously grow happy, if they only remain true to one another, and will learn the wisdom always to hope and often to forgive.

The Tracys, however, overlooked all this, and mutual friends (those invariable foes to all that is generous and unworldly) smiled upon the prudence of their temporary separation. The captain was to come home again on furlough in five years at furthest, even if the aunt held out so long; and this availed to keep his wife in the rear-guard; therefore, Mrs. Tracy wiped her eyes, bade adieu to her retreating lord in Plymouth Sound, and determined to abide, with other expectant dames and Asiatic invalided heroes, at Burleigh-Singleton, until she might go to him, or he return to her: for pleasant little Burleigh, besides its contiguity to arriving Indiamen, was advantageous as being the dwelling-place of aforesaid Mrs. Green,—that wealthy widowed aunt devoutly wished in heaven: and the considerate old soul had offered her designing niece a home with her, till Tracy could come back.

During the first year of absence, ship-letters and India letters arrived duteously in consecutive succession: but somehow or other, the regular post, in no long time afterwards, became unfaithful to its trust; and if Mrs. Jane heard quarterly, which at any rate she did through the agent, when he remitted her allowance, she consoled herself as to the captain's well-being: in due course of things, even this became irregular; he was far up the country, hunting, fighting, surveying, and what not; and no wonder that letters, if written at all, which I rather doubt, got lost. Then

there came a long period of positive and protracted silence, months of it, years of it; barring that her checks for cash were honored still at Hancock's, though they could tell her nothing of her lord; so that Mrs. Tracy was at length seriously recommended by her friends to become a widow; she tried on the cap, and looked into many mirrors; but, after long inspection, decided upon still remaining a wife, because the weeds were so clearly unbecoming. Habit, meanwhile, and that still existing old aunt, who seemed resolved to live to a hundred, kept her as before at Burleigh: and, seeing that a few months after the captain's departure she had presented the world, not to say her truant lord, with twins, she had always found something to do in the way of, what she considered, education, and other juvenile amusement: that is to say, when the gaieties of a circle of fifteen miles in radius left her any time to spare in such a process. The twins, a brace of boys, were born and bred at Burleigh, and had attained severally to twenty years of age, just before their father came home again as brevet-major-general: but both they, and that arrival, deserve special detail, each in its own chapter.

CHAPTER II.

The Heroes.

MRS. TRACY'S sons were as unlike each other as it is well possible for two human beings to be, both in person and character. Julian, whose forward and bold spirit gained him from the very cradle every prerogative of eldership (and he did struggle first into life, too, so he was the first-born), had grown to be a swarthy, strong, big-boned man, of the Roman-nosed, or, more physiognomically, the Jewish cast of countenance; with melo-dramatic elf-locks, large whiskers, and ungovernable passions; loud, fierce, impetuous; cunning, too, for all his overbearing clamor; and an embodied personification of those choice essentials to criminal happiness,—a hard heart, and a good digestion. Charles, on the contrary (or, as logicians would say, on the contradictory), was fair-haired, blue-eyed, of Grecian features; slim, though well enough for inches, and had hitherto (as the commonalty have it), "enjoyed" weak health: he was gentle and affectionate in heart, pure and religious in mind, studious and unobtrusive in habits. It was a wonder to see the strange diversity between those own twin brothers, born within the same hour, and, it is superfluous to add, of the same parents; brought up in all outward things alike, and who had shared equally in all that might be called advantage or disadvantage, of circumstance or education.

Certain is it that minds are different at birth, and require as different a treatment as Iceland moss from cactuses, or bull-dogs from bull-finches: certain is it, too, that Julian, early submitted and resolutely broken in, would have made as great a man, as Charles, naturally meek, did make a good one; but, for the matter of educating her boys, poor Mrs. Tracy had no more notion of the feat, than of squaring the circle, or determining the longitude. She kept them both at home, till the peevish aunt could suffer Julian's noise no longer: the house was a Pandemonium, and the

Giant grown too big for that castle of Otranto; so he must go at any rate; and (as no difference in the treatment of different characters ever occurred to anybody) of course Charles must go along with him. Away they went to an expensive school, which Julian's insubordination on the instant could not brook,—and, accordingly, he ran away: without doubt, Charles must be taken away too. Another school was tried: Julian got expelled this time; and Charles, in spite of prizes, must, on system, be removed with him: so forth, with like wisdom, all through the years of adolescence and instruction, those ill-matched brothers were driven as a pair. Then again, for fashion's sake, and aunt Green's whims, the circumspective mother, notwithstanding all her inconsistencies, gave each of them prettily bound hand-books of devotion; which the one used upon his knees, and the other lit cigars withal; both extremes having exceeded her intention: and she proved similarly overreached when she persisted in treating both exactly alike, as to liberal allowances, and liberty of will; the result being, that one of her sons "foolishly" spent his money in a multitude of charitable hobbies; and that the other was constantly supplied with means for (the mother was sorry to say it, vulgar) dissipation. By consequence, Charles did more good, and Julian more evil, than I have time to stop and tell off.

If anything in this life must be personal, peculiar, and specific, it is education: we take upon ourselves to speak thus dogmatically, not of mere school-teaching only, *musa*, *musæ*, and so forth; nor yet of lectures, on relative qualities of carbon and nitrogen in vegetables; no, nor even of schemes of theology, or codes of morals; but we do speak of the daily and hourly reining-in, or letting-out, of discouragement in one appetite, and encouragement in another; of habitual formation of characters in their diversity; and of shaping their bear's-cub, or that child-angel, the natural human mind, to its destined ends; that it may turn out, for good, according to its several natures, to be either the strong-armed, bold-eyed rough-hewer of God's grand designs, or the delicate-fingered polisher of His rarest sculptures. Julian, well-trained, might have grown to be a Luther; and many a gentle soul like Charles has turned out a coxcomb and a sensualist.

The boys were born, as I have said, in the regulation order of

things, a few months after Captain Tracy sailed away for India some full score of years, and more, from this present hour, when we have seen him seated as a general in the library at Burleigh; and, until the last year, they had never seen their father, scarcely ever heard of him.

The incidents of their lives had been few and common-place: it would be easy, but wearisome, to specify the orchards, and the beehives, which Julian had robbed as a school-boy; the rebellions he had headed; the monkey tricks he had played upon old fishwomen; and the cruel havoc he made of cats, rats, and other poor tormented creatures, who had ministered to his wanton and brutalizing joys. In like manner, wearily, but easily, might I relate how Charles grew up the nurse's darling, though little of his flaunting mother's; the curly-pated young bookworm; the sympathizing, inoffensive, gentle heart, whose effort still it was to countervail his brother's evil: how often, at the risk of blows, had he interposed to save some drowning puppy: how often paid the bribe for Julian's impunity, when mulcted for some damage done in the way of broken windows, upset apple-stalls, and the like: how often had he screened his bad twin brother from the flagellatory consequences of sheer idleness, by doing for him all his school-tasks: how often striven to guide his insensate conscience to truth, and good, and wisdom: how often, and how vainly!

And when the youths grew up, and their good and evil grew up with them, it were possible to tell you a heart-rending tale of Julian's treachery to more than one poor village beauty; and many a pleasing trait of Charles's pure benevolence, and wise zeal to remedy his brother's mischiefs. The one went about doing ill, and the other doing good: Julian, on account of obligations, more truly than in spite of them, hated Charles; and yet one great aim of all Charles's amiabilities tended continually to Julian's good, and he strove to please him, too, while he wished to bless him. The one had grown to manhood, full of unrepented sins, and ripe for darker crime: the other had attained a like age of what is somewhat satirically called discretion, having amassed, with Solon of old, "knowledge day by day," having lived a life of piety and

purity, and blest with a cheerful disposition, that teemed with happy thoughts.

They had, of course, in the progress of human life, been both laid upon the bed of sickness, where, with similar contrast, the one lay muttering discontent, and the other smiling patiently: they had both been in dangers by land and by sea, where Julian, though not a little lacking to himself at the moment of peril, was still loudly minacious till it came too near; while Charles, with all his caution, was more actually courageous, and in spite of all his gentleness, stood against the worst undaunted: they had both, with opposite motives and dissimilar modes of life, passed through various vicissitudes of feeling, scene, society; and the influence of circumstance on their different characters, heightened or diminished, bettered or depraved, by the good or evil principle in each, had produced their different and probable results.

Thus, strangely dissimilar, the twin brothers together stand before us: Julian the strong impersonation of the animal man, as Charles of the intellectual; Julian, matter, Charles, spirit; Julian, the creature of this world, tending to a lower and a worse; Charles, though in the world, not of the world, and reaching to a higher and a better.

Mrs. Tracy, the mother of this various progeny, had been somewhat of a beauty in her day, albeit much too large and masculine for the taste of ordinary mortals; and though now very considerably past forty, the vain vast female was still ambitious of compliment, and greedy of admiration. That Julian should be such a woman's favorite will surprise none; she had, she could have, no sympathies with mild and thoughtful Charles; but rather dreaded to set her flaunting folly in the light of his wise glance, and sought to hide her humbled vanity from his pure and keen perceptions. His very presence was a tacit rebuke te her social dissipation, and she could not endure the mild radiance of his virtues. He never fawned and flattered her, as Julian would; but had even suffered filial presumption (it could not be affection, O dear no!) to go so far as gently to expostulate at what he fancied wrong: he never gave her reason to contrast, with happy self-complacence, her own soul's state with Charles's, however she could with Julian's: and then, too, she would indulgently

allow her foolish mind, a woman's though a parent's, to admire that tall, black, bandit-looking son, above the slight build, the delicate features, and almost feminine elegance of his brother. she found Julian always ready to countenance and pamper her gayest wishes, and was glad to make him her escort everywhere, at balls, and fêtes, and races, and archery parties; while as to Charles, he would be the stay-at-home, the milksop, the learned pundit, the pious prayer-monger, anything but the ladies' man. Yes, it is little wonder that Mrs. Tracy's heart clave to Julian, the masculine image of herself; while it barely tolerated Charles, who was a rarefied and idealized likeness of the absent and forgotten Tracy.

But the mother,—and there are many silly mothers, almost as many as silly men and silly maids,—in her admiration of the outward form of manliness, overlooked the true strength, and chivalry, and nobleness of mind which shone supreme in Charles. How would Julian have acted in such a case as this?—a sheep had wandered down the cliff's face to a narrow ledge of rock, whence it could not come back again, for there was no room to turn: Julian would have pelted it, and set his bull-dog at it, and rejoiced to have seen the poor animal's frantic leaps from shingly shelf to shelf, till it should be dashed to pieces: but how did Charles act? with the utmost courage, and caution, and presence of mind, he crept down, and, at the risk of his life, dragged the bleating unreluctant creature up again; it really seemed as if the ungrateful poor dumb brute recognized its humane friend, and suffered him to rescue it without struggle or a motion that might have endangered both.

Again: a burly costermonger was belaboring his donkey, and the wretched beast fell beneath his cudgel: strange to say, Julian and Charles were walking together that time; and the same sight affected each so differently, that the one sided with the cruel man, and the other with his suffering victim: Charles, in momentary indignation, rushed up to the fellow, wrested the cudgel from his hand, and flung it over the cliff; while Julian was so base, so cowardly, as to reward such generous interference, by holding his weaker brother's arms, and inviting the wrathful costermonger to expend the remainder of his frenzy on unlucky Charles.

Yes, and when at home Mrs. Tracy heard all this, she was silly enough, wicked enough, to receive her truly noble son with ridicule, and her other one, the child of her disgrace, with approval:

"It will teach you, Master Charles, not to meddle with common people and their donkeys; and you may thank your brother Julian for giving you a lesson how a gentleman should behave."

Poor Charles! but poorer Julian, and poorest Mrs. Tracy.

It would be easy, if need were, to enumerate multiplied examples tending towards the same end,—a large, masculine-featured mother's foolish preference of the loud, bold, worldly animal, before the meek, kind, noble, spiritual. And the results of all these many matters were, that now, at twenty years of age, Charles found himself as it were alone in a strange land, with many common friends indeed abroad, but at home no nearer dearer ties to string his heart's dank lyre withal; neither mother nor brother, nor any other kind familiar face to look upon his gentleness in love, or to sympathize with his affections, unapprehended, unappreciated: so—while Mrs. Tracy was the showy, gay, and vapid thing she ever had been, and Julian the same impetuous mother's son which his very nurse could say she knew him—Charles grew up a shy and silent youth, necessarily reserved, for lack of some one to understand him; necessarily chilled, for want of somebody to love him.

CHAPTER III.

The Arrival.

THE young men were thus situated as regards both the world and one another, and Mrs. Tracy had almost entirely forgotten the fact, that she possessed a piece of goods so supererogatory as her husband (a property too which her children had never quite realized), when all on a sudden, one ordinary morning, the postman's knock brought to her breakfast-table at Burleigh-Singleton the following epistle:

"British Channel, Thursday, March 11th, 1842.
"The Sir William Elphinston, E.I.M.

"DEAR JANE,

"You will be surprised to find that you are to see me so soon I dare say, especially as it is now some years since you will have heard from me. The reason is, I have been long in an out-of-the-way part of India, where there is little communication with Europe, and so you will excuse my not writing. We hope to find ourselves to-night in Plymouth roads, where I shall get into a pilot-boat, and so shall see you to-morrow. You may, therefore, now expect your affectionate husband,

"J. G. J. TRACY, General H.E.I.C.S.

"P.S. 1.—Remember me to our boy, or boys,—which is it?

"P.S. 2.—I bring with me the daughter of a friend in India, who is come over for a year or two's polish at a first-rate school. Of course you will be glad to receive her as our guest.

"J. G. J. T."

This loving letter was the most startling event that had ever attempted to unnerve Mrs. Tracy; and she accordingly managed, for effect and propriety's sake, to grow very faint upon the spot, whether for joy, or sorrow, or fear of lost liberty, or hope of a

restored lord, doth not appear; she had so long been satisfied with receiving quarterly pay from the India agents, that she forgot it was an evidence of her husband's existence; and lo, here he was returning a general, doubtlessly a magnificent moustachioed individual, and she was to be Mrs. General! so that when she came completely to herself, after that feint of a faint, she was thinking of nothing but court-plumes, oriental pearls, and her gallant Tracy's uniform.

The postscripts also had their influence: Charles, naturally affectionate, and willing to love a hitherto unseen father, felt hurt, as well he might, at the "boy, or boys;" while Julian, who ridiculed his brother's sentimentality, was already fancying that "the daughter of a friend" might be a pleasant addition to the dulness of Burleigh-Singleton.

Preparations vast were made at once for the General's reception; from attic to kitchen was sounded the tocsin of his coming. Julian was all bustle and excitement, to his mother's joy and pride; while Charles merited her wrath, by too much of his habitual and paternal quietude, particularly when he withdrew his forces altogether from the loud domestic fray, by retreating upstairs to cogitate and muse, perhaps to make a calming prayer or two about all these matters of importance. As for Mrs. Tracy herself, she was even now, within the first hour of that news, busily engaged in collecting cosmetics, trinkets, blonde lace, and other female finery, resolved to trick herself out like Jezebel, and win her lord once more; whilst the pernicious old aunt, who still lived on, notwithstanding all those twenty years of patience, as vivacious as before, grumbled and scolded so much at this upsetting of her house, that there was really some risk of her altering the will at last, and cutting out Jane Tracy after all.

And the morrow morning came, as if it were no more than an ordinary Friday, and with it came expectancy; and noon succeeded, and with it spirits alternately elated and depressed; and evening drew in, with heart-sickness and chagrin at hopes or prophecies deferred; and night, and next morning, and still the General came not. So, much weeping at that vexing disappointment, after so many pains to please, Mrs. Tracy put aside her numerous aids and appliances, and lay slatternly abed, to nurse

a headache until noon; and all had well nigh forgotten the probable arrival, when, to everybody's dismay, a dusty chaise and four suddenly rattled up the terrace, and stopped at our identical number 7.

Then was there scuffling up, and getting down, and making preparation in hot haste; and a stout gentleman with a gambooge face descended from the chaise, exploding wrath like a bomb-shell, that so important an approach had made such slight appearance of expectancy: it was disrespectful to his rank, and he took care to prove he was a somebody, by blowing up the very innocent postboys. This accomplished, he gallantly handed out after him a pretty-looking miss in her teens. Poor Mrs. Tracy, *en papillotes*, looked out at the casement like any one but Jezebel attired for bewitching, and could have cried for vexation; in fact, she did, and passed it off for feeling. Aunt Green, whom the General at first lovingly saluted as his wife (for the poor man had entirely forgotten the uxorial appearance) was all in a pucker for deafness, blindness, and evident misapprehension of all things in general, though clearly pleased, and flattered at her gallant nephew's salutation. Julian, with what grace of manner he could muster, was already playing the agreeable to that pretty ward, after having, to the General's great surprise, introduced himself to him as his son; while Charles, who had rushed into the room, warm-heartedly to fling himself into his father's arms, was repelled on the spot for his affection: General Tracy, with a military air, excused himself from the embrace, extending a finger to the unknown gentleman with somewhat of offended dignity.

At last, down came the wife: our General at once perceived himself mistaken in the matter of Mrs. Green; and, coldly bowing to the bedizened dame, acknowledged her pretensions with a courteous—

"Mrs. General Tracy, allow me to introduce to you Miss Emily Warren, the daughter of a very particular friend of mine:—Miss Warren, Mrs. Tracy."

For other welcomings, mutual astonishment at each other's fat, some little sorrowful talk of the twenty years ago, and some dull paternal jest about this dozen feet of sons, made up the chilly meeting: and the slender thread of sentimentals, which might

possibly survive it, was soon snapt by paying postboys, orders after luggage, and devouring tiffin.

The only persons who felt anything at all, were Mrs. Tracy, vexed at her dishabille, and mortified at so cool a reception of, what she hoped, her still unsullied beauties; and Charles, poor fellow, who ran up to his studious retreat, and soothed his grief, as best he might, with philosophic fancies: it was so cold, so heartless, so unkind a greeting. Romantic youth! how should the father have known him for a son?

CHAPTER IV.

The General and his Ward.

It is surprising what a change twenty years of a tropical sun can make in the human constitution. The Captain went forth a good-looking, good-tempered man, destitute neither of kind feelings nor masculine beauty: the General returned bloated, bilious, irascible, entirely selfish, and decidedly ill-favored. Such affections as he ever had seemed to have been left behind in India,—that new world, around which now all his associations and remembrances revolved; and the reserve (clearly reproduced in Charles), the habit of silence whereof we took due notice in the springtide of his life, had now grown, perhaps from some oppressive secret, into a settled, moody, continuous taciturnity, which made his curious wife more vexed at him than ever; for, notwithstanding all the news he must have had to tell her, the company of John George Julian Tracy proved to his long expectant Jane anything but cheering or instructive. His past life, and present feelings, to say nothing of his future prospects, might all be but a blank, for anything the General seemed to care: brandy and tobacco, an easy chair, and an ordnance map of India, with Emily beside him to talk about old times, these were all for which he lived: and even the female curiosity of a wife, duly authorized to ask questions, could extract from him astonishingly little of his Indian experiences. As to his wealth, indeed, Mrs. Tracy boldly made direct inquiry; for Julian set her on to beg for a commission, and Charles also was anxious for a year or two at college: but the General divulged not much: albeit he vouchsafed to both his sons a liberally increased allowance. It was only when his wife, piqued at such reserve, pettishly remarked,

"At any rate, sir, I may be permitted to hope, that Miss Warren's friends are kind enough to pay her expenses;"

That the veteran, in high dudgeon at any imputation on his Indian acquaintances, sternly answered,

"You need not be apprehensive, madam; Emily Warren is amply provided for." Words which sank deep into the prudent mother's mind.

But we must not too long let dock-leaves hide a violet; it is high time, and barely courteous now, to introduce that beautiful exotic, Emily Warren. Her own history, as she will tell it to Charles hereafter, was so obscure, that she knew little of it certainly herself, and could barely gather probabilities from scattered fragments. At present, we have only to survey results in a superficial manner: in their due season we will dig up all the roots.

No heroine can probably engage our interest or sympathy who possesses the infirmity of ugliness: it is not in human nature to admire her, and human nature is a thing very much to be consulted. Moreover, no one ever yet saw an amiable personage, who was not so far pleasing,—or, in other parlance, so far pretty. I cannot help the common course of things; and however hackneyed be the thought, however commonplace the phrase, it is true, nevertheless, that beauty, singular beauty, would be the first idea of any rational creature, who caught but a glimpse of Emily Warren; and I should account it little wonder, if, upon a calmer gaze, that beauty were found to have its deepest, clearest fountain in those large dark eyes of her's.

Aware as I may be, that "large dark eyes" are no novelty in tales like this; and famous for rare originality as my pen (not to say genius) would become, if an attempt were herein made to interest the world in a pink-eyed heroine, still I prefer plodding on in the well-worn path of pleasant beauty: and so long as Nature's bounty continues to supply so well the world we live in with large dark eyes, and other feminine perfections, our Emily at any rate remains in fashion; and if she has many pretty peers, let us at least not peevishly complain of them. A graceful shape is, luckily, almost the common prerogative of female youthfulness; a dimpled smile, a cheerful, winning manner, regular features, and a mass of luxuriant brown hair,—these all heroines have,—and so has our's.

But no heroine ever had yet Emily Warren's eyes; not identically only, which few can well deny; but similarly also, which the many must be good enough to grant: and very few heroes indeed ever saw their equal; though, if any hereabouts object, I will not be so cruel or unreasonable as to hope they will admit it. At first, full of soft light, gentle and alluring, they brighten up to blaze upon you lustrously, and fascinate the gazer's dazzled glance: there are depths in them that tell of the unfathomable soul, heights in them that speak of the spirit's aspirations. It is gentleness and purity, no less than sensibility and passion, that look forth in such strange power from those windows of the mind: it is not the mere beautiful machine, fair form, and pleasing colors, but the heavenborn light of tenderness and truth, streaming through the lens, that takes the fond heart captive. Charles, for one, could not help looking long and keenly into Emily Warren's eyes; they magnetized him, so that he might not turn away from them: entranced him, that he would not break their charm, had he been able: and then the long tufted eyelashes droop so softly over those blazing suns,—that I do not in the least wonder at Charles's impolite, perhaps, but still natural involuntary stare, and his mute abstracted admiration: the poor youth is caught at once, a most willing captive,—the moth has burnt its wings, and flutters still happily around that pleasant warming radiance. How his heart yearned for something to love, some being worthy of his own most pure affections: and lo! these beauteous eyes, true witnesses of this sweet mind, have filled him for ever and a day with love at first sight.

But gentle Charles was not the only conquest: the fiery Julian, too, acknowledged her supremacy, bowed his stubborn neck, and yoked himself at once, another and more rugged captive, to the chariot of her charms. It was Caliban, as well as Ferdinand, courting fair Miranda. In his lower grade, he loved,—fiercely, coarsely: and the same passion, which filled his brother's heart with happiest aspirations, and pure unselfish tenderness towards the beauteous stranger, burnt him up as an inward and consuming fire: Charles sunned himself in heaven's genial beams, while Julian was hot with the lava-current of his own bad heart's volcano.

It will save much trouble, and do away with no little useless mystery, to declare at the outset, which of these opposite twin-brothers our dark-eyed Emily preferred. She was only seventeen in years; but an Indian sky had ripened her to full maturity, both of form and feelings: and having never had any one whom she cared to think upon, and let her heart delight in, till Charles looked first upon her beauty wonderingly, it is no marvel if she unconsciously reciprocated his young heart's thought,—before ever he had breathed it to himself. Julian's admiration she entirely overlooked; she never thought him more than civil, barely that, perhaps; however he might flatter himself: but her heart and eyes were full of his fair contrast, the light seen brighter against darkness; Charles all the dearer for a Julian. Intensely did she love him, as only tropic blood can love; intently did she gaze on him, when anywhile he could not see her face, as only those dark eyes could gaze: and her mind, all too ignorant but greedy of instruction, no less than her heart, rich in sympathies and covetous of love, went forth, and fed deliciously on the intellectual brow, and delicate flushing cheek of her noble-minded Charles. Not all in a day, nor a week, nor a month, did their loves thus ripen together. Emily was a simple child of nature, who had everything to learn; she scarcely knew her Maker's name, till Charles instructed her in God's great love: the stars were to her only shining studs of gold, and the world one mighty plain, and men and women soulless creatures of a day, and the wisdom of creation unconsidered, and the book of natural knowledge close sealed up, till Charles set out before his eager student the mysteries of earth and heaven. Oh, those blessed hours of sweet teaching! when he led her quick delighted steps up the many avenues of science to the central throne of God! Oh, those happy moments, never to return, when her eyes, in gentle thankfulness for some new truth laid open to them, flashed upon her youthful Mentor, love and intelligence, and pleased admiring wonder! Sweet spring-tide of their loves, who scarcely knew they loved, yet thought of nothing but each other; who walked hand in hand, as brother and sister, in the flowery ways of mutual blessing, mutual dependence: alas, alas, how brief a space can love, that guest from heaven, dwell on earth unsullied!

CHAPTER V.

Jealousy.

For Julian soon perceived that Charles was no despicable rival. At first, self-flattery, and the habitual contempt wherewith he regarded his brother, blinded him to Emily's attachment: moreover, in the scenes of gaiety and the common social circle, she never gave him cause to complain of undue preferences; readily she leant upon his arm, cheerfully accompanied him in morning-visits, noon-day walks, and evening parties; and if pale Charles (in addition to the more regular masters, dancing and music, and other pieces of accomplishment) thought proper to bore her with his books for sundry hours every day, Julian found no fault with that;—the girl was getting more a woman of the world, and all for him: she would like her play-time all the better for such schoolings, and him to be the truant at her side.

But when, from ordinary civilities, the coarse loud lover proceeded to particular attentions; when he affected to press her delicate hand, and ventured to look what he called love into her eyes, and to breathe silly nothings in her ear,—he could deceive himself no longer, notwithstanding all his vanity; as legibly as looks could write it, he read disgust upon her face, and from that day forth she shunned him with undisguised abhorrence. Poor innocent maid! she little knew the man's black mind, who thus dared to reach up to the height of her affections; but she saw enough of character in his swart scowling face, and loud assuming manners, to make her dread his very presence, as a thunder cloud across her summer sky.

Then did the baffled Julian begin to look around him, and took notice of her deepening love of Charles; nay, even purposely, she seemed now to make a difference between them, as if to check presumption and encourage merit. And he watched their stolen

glances, how tremblingly they met each other's gaze; and he would oftentimes roughly break in upon their studies, to look on their confused disquietude with the pallid frowns of envy: he would insult poor Charles before her, in hope to humble him in her esteem; but mild and Christian patience made her see him as a martyr: he would even cast rude slights on her whom he professed to love, with the view of raising his brother's chastened wrath; but was forced to quail and sneak away beneath her quick indignant glance, ere her more philosophical lover had time to expostulate with the cowardly savage.

Meanwhile, what were the parents about? The General had given out, indeed, that he had brought Emily over for schooling; but he seemed so fond of her (in fact, she was the only thing to prove he wore a heart), that he never could resolve upon sending her away from, what she now might well call, home. Often, in some strange dialect of Hindostan, did they converse together, of old times and distant shores; none but Emily might read him to sleep,—none but Emily wake him in the morning with a kiss,—none but Emily dare approach him in his gouty torments,—none but Emily had anything like intimate acquaintance with that moody iron-hearted man.

As to his sons, or the two young men he might presume to be his sons, he neither knew them, nor cared to know. Bare civilities, as between man and man, constituted all which their intercourse amounted to: what were those young fellows, stout or slim, to him? mere accidents of a soldier's gallantries, and of an ill-assorted marriage. He neither had, nor wished to have, any sympathies with them; Julian might be as bad as he pleased, and Charles as good, for anything the General seemed to heed: they could not dive with him into the past, and his sports of Hindostan; they reminded him, simply, of his wife, for pleasures of Memory; of the grave, for pleasures of Hope: he was older when he looked at them; and they seemed to him only living witnesses, of his folly as lieutenant, in the choice of Mrs. Tracy. I will not take upon myself to say, that he had any occasion to congratulate himself on the latter reminiscence.

So he quickly acquiesced in Julian's wish for a commission, and entirely approved of Charles's college schemes. After next

September, the funds should be forthcoming: not but that he was rich enough, and to spare, any month in the year: but he would be vastly richer then, from prize-money, or some such luck. It was more prudent to delay until September.

With reference to Emily,—no, no,—I could see at once, that General Tracy never had any serious intention to part with Emily; but she had all manner of masters at home, and soon made extraordinary progress. As for the matter of his sons falling in love with her, attractive in all beauty though she were, he never once had given it a thought: for, first, he was too much a man of the world to believe in such ideal trash as love; and next, he totally forgot that his "boy, or boys," had human feelings. So, when his wife one day gave him a gentle and triumphant hint of the state of affairs, it came upon him overwhelmingly, like an avalanche: his yellow face turned flake-white, he trembled as he stood, and really seemed to take so natural a probability to heart as the most serious of evils.

"My son Julian in love with Emily! and if not he, at any rate Charles! What the devil, madam, can you mean by this dreadful piece of intelligence?—It's impossible, ma'am; nonsense, it can't be true; it shan't, ma'am."

And the General, having issued his military mandates, wrapped himself in secresy once more; satisfied that both of those troublesome sons were to leave home after next quarter, and the prize-money at Hancock's.

CHAPTER VI.

The Confidante.

But Mrs. Tracy had the best reason for believing her intelligence was true, and she could see very little cause for regarding it as dreadful. True, one son would have been enough for this wealthy Indian heiress,—but still it was no harm to have two strings to her bow. Julian was her favorite, and should have the girl if she could manage it; but if Emily Warren would not hear of such a husband, why, Charles Tracy may far better get her money than anybody else.

That she possessed great wealth was evident: such jewellery, such Trinchinopoli chains, such a blaze of diamonds *en suite*, such a multitude of armlets, and circlets, and earrings, and other oriental finery, had never shone on Devonshire before: at the Eyemouth ball men worshipped her, radiant in beauty, and gorgeously apparelled. Moreover, money overflowed her purse, her workbox, and her jewel-case: Charles's village school, and many other well-considered charities, rejoiced in the streams of her munificence. The General had given her a banker's book of signed blank checks, and she filled up sums at pleasure: such unbounded confidence had he in her own prudence and her far-off father's liberality. The few hints her husband deigned to give encouraged Mrs. Tracy to conclude, that she would be a catch for either of her sons; and, as for the girl herself, she had clearly been brought up to order about a multitude of servants, to command the use of splendid equipages, and to spend money with unsparing hand.

Accordingly, one day when Julian was alone with his mother, their conversation ran as follows:—

"Well, Julian dear, and what do you think of Emily Warren?"

"Think, mother? why—that she's deuced pretty, and dresses

like an empress: but where did the General pick her up, eh?—who is she?"

"Why, as to who she is,—I know no more than you; she is Emily Warren: but as to the great question of what she is, I know that she is rolling in riches, and would make one of my boys a very good wife."

"Oh, as to wife, mother, one isn't going to be fool enough to marry for love nowadays: things are easier managed hereabouts, than that: but money makes it quite another thing. So this pretty minx is rich, is she?"

"A great heiress, I assure you, Julian."

"Bravo, bravo-o: but how to make the girl look sweet upon me, mother? there's that white-livered fellow, Charles,—"

"Never mind him, boy; do you suppose he would have the heart to make love to such a splendid creature as Miss Warren: fie, Julian, for a faint heart: Charles is well enough as a sabbath-school teacher, but I hope he will not bear away the palm of ladye-love from my fine high-spirited Julian." Poor Mrs. Tracy was as flighty and romantic at forty-five as she had been at fifteen.

The fine high-spirited Julian answered not a word, but looked excessively cross; for he knew full well that Charles's chance was to his in the ratio of a million to nothing.

"What, boy," went on the prudent mother, "still silent; I am afraid Emily's good looks have been thrown away upon you, and that your heart has not found out how to love her."

"Love her, mother? Curses! would you drive me mad? I think and dream of nothing but that girl: morning, noon, and night her eyes persecute me: go where I will, and do what I will, her image haunts me: d—— it, mother, don't I love the girl?"

[Oh love, love! thou much slandered monosyllable, how desperately do bad men malign thee.]

"Hush, Julian, pray be more guarded in your language; I am glad to see though that your heart is in the right place: suppose now that I aid your suit a little? I dare say I could do a great deal for you, my son; and nothing could be more delightful to your mother than to try and make her Julian happy."

True, Mrs. Tracy, you were always theatrically given, and played the coquette in youth; so in age the character of go-between befits you still: dearly do you love to dabble in, what you are pleased to call, "*une affaire du cœur.*"

"Mother," after a pause replied her hopeful progeny, "if the girl had been only pretty, I shouldn't have asked anybody's help; for marriage was never to my liking, and folks may have their will of prouder beauties than this Emily, without going to church for it; but money makes it quite another matter; and I may as well have the benefit of your assistance in this matter o' money, ey mother? matrimony, you know: an heiress and a beauty may be worth the wedding-ring; besides, when my commission comes, I can follow the good example that my parents set me, you know; and, after a three months' honey-mooning, can turn bachelor again for twenty years or so, as our Governor-General did, and so leave wifey at home, till she becomes a Mrs. General like you."

Now, strange to say, this heartless bit of villainy was anything but unpleasing to the foolish flattered heart of Mrs. Tracy; he was a chip of the old block, no better than his fathers: so she thanked "dear Julian" for his confidence, with admiration and emotion; and looking upwards, after the fashion of a Covent Garden martyr, blessed him.

CHAPTER VII.

The Course of True Love, etc.

"EMILY, my dear, take Julian's arm: here, Charles, come and change with me; I should like a walk with you to Oxton, to see how your little scholars get on." So spake the intriguing mother.

"Why that is just what I was going to do with Charles," said Emily, "and if Julian will excuse me——"

"Oh, never mind me, Miss Warren, pray; come along with me, will you, mother?"

So they paired off in more well-matched couples (for Julian luckily took huff) and went their different ways: with those went hatred, envy, worldly scheming, and that lowest sort of love that ill deserves the name; with these remain all things pure, affectionate, benevolent.

"Charles, dear," they were just like brother and sister, innocent and loving, "how kind it is of you to take me with you; if you only knew how I dreaded Julian!"

"Why, Emmy? can he have offended you in any way?"

"Oh, Charles, he is so rude, and says such silly things, and—I am quite afraid to be alone with him."

"What—what—what does he say to you, Emily?" hurriedly urged her half-avowed lover.

"Oh, don't ask me, Charles—pray drop the subject," and, as she blushed, tears stood in her eyes.

Charles bit his lip and clenched his fist involuntarily; but an instant word of prayer drove away the spirit of hatred, and set up love triumphant in its place.

"My Emily—oh, what have I said? may I—may I call you my Emily? dearest, dearest girl!" escaped his lips, and he trembled at his own presumption. It was a presumptuous speech, indeed; but it burst from the well of his affections, and he could not help it.

Her answer was not in words, and yet his heartstrings thrilled beneath the melody; for her eyes shed on him a blaze of love that made him almost faint before them. In an instant, they understood, without a word, the happy truth, that each one loved the other.

"Precious, precious Emily!" They were now far away from Burleigh, in the fields; and he seized her hand and covered it with kisses.

What more they said I was not by to hear, and if I had been would not have divulged it. There are holy secrets of affection, which those who can remember their first love,—and first love is the only love worth mentioning,—may think of for themselves. Well, far better than my feeble pencilling can picture, will they fill up this slight sketch. That walk to Oxton, that visit to the village school, was full of generous affections unrepressed, the outpourings of two deep-welled hearts, flowing forth in sympathetic ecstasy. The trees, and fields, and cottages, were bathed in heavenly light, and the lovers happy in each other's trust, called upon the all-seeing God to bless the best affections of His children.

And what a change these mutual confessions made in both their minds? Doubt was gone; they *were* beloved; oh richest treasure of joy! Fear was gone; they dared declare their love; oh purest river of all sublunary pleasures! No longer pale, anxious, thoughtful, worn by the corroding care of "Does she—does she love?"—Charles was, from that moment, a buoyant, cheerful, exhilarated being,—a new character; he put on manliness, and fortitude, and somewhat of involuntary pride; whilst Emily felt, that enriched by the affections of him whom she regarded as her wisest, kindest earthly friend, by the acquisition of his love, who had led her heart to higher good than this world at its best can give her, she was elevated and ennobled from the simple Indian child, into the loved and honored Christian woman. They went on that important walk to Oxton feeble, divided, unsatisfied in heart: they returned as two united spirits, one in faith, one in hope, one in love, both heavenly and earthly.

But the happy hour is past too soon; and, home again, they

mixed once more with those conflicting elements of hatred and contention.

"Emily," asked the General, in a very unusual stretch of curiosity, "where have you been to with Charles Tracy? You look flushed, my dear; what 's the matter?"

Of course "nothing" was the matter; and the General was answered wisely, for love was nothing in his average estimate of men and women.

"Charles, what can have come to you? I never saw you look so happy in my life," was the mother's troublesome inquiry; "why, our staid youth positively looks cheerful."

Charles's walk had refreshed him, taken away his head-ache, put him in spirits, and all manner of glib reasons for rejoicing.

"You were right, Julian," whispered Mrs. Tracy, "and we 'll soon put the stopper on all this sort of thing."

So then, the moment our guiltless pair of lovers had severally stolen away to their own rooms, there to feast on well-remembered looks, and words, and hopes, there to lay before that heavenly Friend, whom both had learned to trust, all their present joys, as aforetime all their cares,—Mrs. Tracy looked significantly at Julian, and thus addressed her ever stern-eyed lord:—

"So, General, the old song's coming true to us, I find, as to other folks, who once were young together;

> 'And when with Envy Time transported
> Seeks to rob us of our joys,
> You'll in your girls again be courted,
> And I 'll go wooing in my boys.'"

So said or sung the flighty Mrs. Tracy. It was as simple and innocent a quotation as could possibly be made; I suppose most couples, who ever heard the stanza, and have grown-up children, have thought upon its dear domestic beauty: but it strangely affected the irascible old General. He fumed and frowned, and looked the picture of horror; then, with a fierce oath at his wife and sons, he firmly said—

"Woman, hold your fool's tongue: begone, and send Emily to me this minute: stop, Mr. Julian,—no,—run up for your brother

Charles, and come you all to me in the study. Instantly, sir! do as I bid you, without a word."

Julian would gladly have fought it out with his imperative father; but, nevertheless, it was a comfort to have to fetch pale Charles for a jobation; so he went at once. And the three young people, two of them trembling with affections overstrained, and the third indurated in effrontery, stood before that stern old man.

"Emily, child,"—and he added something in Hindostanee,—"have I been kind to you,—and do you owe me any love?"

"Dear, dear sir, how can you ask me that?" said the warm affectioned girl, falling on her knees in tears.

"Get up, sweet child, and hear me: you see those boys: as you love me, and yourself, and happiness, and honor,—dare not to think of either, one moment, as your husband."

Emily fainted; Charles staggered to assist her, though he well-nigh swooned himself; and Julian folded his arms with a resolute air, as waiting to hear what next.

But the General disappointed him: he had said his say: and, as volatile salts, a lady's maid, and all that sort of reinvigoration, seemed essential to Emily's recovery, he rang the bell forthwith: so the pleasant family party broke up without another word.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Mystery.

Our lovers would not have been praiseworthy, perhaps not human, had they not met in secret once and again. True, their regularly concerted studies were forbidden, and they never now might openly walk out unaccompanied: but love (who has not found this out ?) is both daring and ingenious; and, notwithstanding all that Emily purposed about doing as the General so strangely bade her, they had many happy meetings, rich with many happy words: all the happier no doubt for their stolen sweetness.

There was one great and engrossing subject which often had employed their curiosity; who and what was Emily Warren ? for the poor girl did not know herself. All she could guess, she told Charles, as he zealously cross-questioned her from time to time: and the result of his inquiries would appear to be as follows:—

Emily's earliest recollections were of great barbaric pomp; huge elephants richly caparisoned, mighty fans of peacock's tails, lines of matchlock men, tribes of jewelled servants, a gilded palace, with its gardens and fountains; plenty of rare gems to play with, and a splendid queenly woman, whom she called by the Hindoo name for mother. The General, too, was there among her first associations, as the gallant Captain Tracy, with his company of native troops.

Then an era happened in her life; a tearful leave-taking with that proud Princess, who scarcely would part with her for sorrow; but the Captain swore it should be so: and an old Scotchwoman, her nurse, she could remember, who told her as a child, but whether religiously or not she could not tell, "darling, come to me, when you wish to know who made you;" and

then Mrs. Mackie went and spoke to the Princess, and soothed her, that she let the child depart peacefully. Most of her gorgeous jewellery dated from that earliest time of inexplicable oriental splendor.

After those infantine seven years the Captain took her with him to his station up the country, where she lived she knew not how long in a strong hillfort, one Puttymuddyfudgepoor, where there was a great deal of fighting, and besieging, and storming, and cannonading; but it ceased at last, and the Captain, who then soon successively became both Major and Colonel, always kept her in his own quarters, making her his little pet; and, after the fighting was all over, his brother officers would take her out hunting in their howdahs, and she had plenty of palanquin-bearers, sepoys, and servants at command; and, what was more, good nurse Mackie was her constant friend and attendant.

Time wore on, and many little incidents of Indian life occurred, which varied every day indeed, but still left nothing consequential behind them: there were tiger-hunts, and incursions of Scindian tribes, and Pindarree chieftains taken captive, and wounded soldiers brought into the hospital; and often had she and good nurse Mackie tended at the sick bedside. And the Colonel had the jungle fever, and would not let her go from his sight; so she caught the fever too, and through Heaven's mercy was recovered. And the Colonel was fonder of her now than ever, calling her his darling little child, and was proud to display her early budding beauty to his military friends: pleasant sort of gentlemen, who gave her pretty presents.

Then she grew up into womanhood, and saw more than one fine uniform at her feet, but she did not comprehend those kindnesses: and the General (he was a General now) got into great passions with them, and stormed, and swore, and drove them all away. Nurse Mackie grew to be old, and sometimes asked her, "Can you keep a secret, child?—no, no, I dare not trust you yet: wait a wee, wait a wee, my bonnie bonnie bairn."

And now speedily came the end. The General resolved on returning to his own old shores: chiefly, as it seemed, to avoid the troublesome pertinacity of sundry suitors, who sought of him the hand of Emily Warren. For, by this name was she begin-

ning to be called: in her earliest recollection, she was Amina; then at the hillfort, Emily, Emily, nothing for years but Emily: and as she grew to womanhood, the General bade her sign her name to notes, and leave her card at houses, as Emily Warren: why, or by what right, she never thought of asking. But nurse Mackie had hinted she might have had "a better name and a truer;" and therefore, she herself had asked the General what this hint might mean; and he was so angry that he discharged nurse Mackie at Madras, directly he arrived there to take ship for England.

Then, just before embarking, poor nurse Mackie came to her secretly, and said, "Child, I will trust you with a word; you are not what he thinks you." And she cried a great deal, and longed to come to England; but the General would not hear of it; so he pensioned her off, and left her at Madras, giving somebody strict orders not to let her follow him.

Nevertheless, just as they were getting into the boat to cross the surf, the affectionate old soul ran out upon the strand, and called to her "Amy Stuart! Amy Stuart!" to the General's great amazement as clearly as her own; and she held up a packet in her hand as they were pushing off, and shouted after her, "Child, child! if you would have your rights, remember Jeanie Mackie!"

After that succeeded the monotony of a long sea voyage. The General at first seemed vexed about Mrs. Mackie, and often wished that he had asked her what she meant; however, his brow soon cleared, for he reflected that a discarded servant always tells falsehoods, if only to make her master mischief.

"The voyage over, Charles, with all its cards, quadrilles, doubling the cape, crossing the line, and the wearisome routine of sky and sea, the quarter-deck and cabin, we found ourselves at length in Plymouth Sound; left the Indiaman to go up the channel, and I suppose the post-chaise may be consigned to your imagi nation."

CHAPTER IX.

How to clear it up.

In all this there was mystery enough for a dozen lovers to have crazed their brains about. Emily might be a queen of the East, defrauded of hereditary glories, and at any rate deserved such rank, if Charles was to be judge; but what was more important, if the General had any reason at all for his arbitrary mandate prohibiting their love, it was very possible that reason was a false one.

Meantime Charles had little now to live for except his dear forbidden Emily, any more than she for him. And to peace of mind in both, the elucidation of that mystery which hung about her birth, grew more needful day by day. At last one summer evening, when they had managed a quiet walk upon the sands under the Beacon cliff, Charles said abruptly, after some moments of abstraction, "Dearest, I am resolved."

"Resolved, Charles, what about?" and she felt quite alarmed; for her lover looked so stern, that she could not tell what was going to happen next.

"I'll clear it up, that I will; I only wish I had the money."

"Why, Charles, what in the world are you dreaming about? you frighten me, dearest; are you ill? don't look so serious, pray."

"Yes, Emily, I will; at once too. I'm off to Madras by next packet; or, that is to say, would if I could get my passage free."

"My noble Charles, if that were the only objection, I would get you all the means; for the kind, kind General suffers me to have whatever sums I choose to ask for. Only, Charles, indeed I cannot spare you; do not—do not go away and leave me; there's Julian, too,—don't leave me,—and you might never come back, and—and—" all the remainder was lost in sobbing.

"No, my Emmy, we must not use the General's gold in doing what he might not wish; it would be ungenerous. I will try to get somebody to lend me what I want,—say Mrs. Sainsbury, or the Tamworths. And as for leaving you, my love, have no fears for me or for yourself; situated as we are, I take it as a duty to go and make you happier, setting you in your rights, whatever hese may be; and for the rest, I leave you in His holy keeping who can preserve you alike in body, as in soul, from all things that would hurt you, and whose mercy will protect me in all perils, and bring me back to you in safety. This is my trust, Emmy."

"Dear Charles, you are always wiser and better than I am: let it be so then, my best of friends. Seek out good nurse Mackie, I can give you many clues, hear what she has to say; and may the God of your own poor fatherless Emily speed your holy mission! Yet there is one thing, Charles; ought you not to ask your parents for their leave to go? You are better skilled to judge than I can be, though."

"Emmy, whom have I to ask? my father? he cares not whither I go nor what becomes of me; I hardly know him, and for twenty years of my short life of twenty-one, scarcely believed in his existence; or should I ask my mother? alas, love! I wish I could persuade myself that she would wish me back again if I were gone; moreover, how can I respect her judgment, or be guided by her counsel, whose constant aim has been to thwart my feeble efforts after truth and wisdom, and to pamper all ill growths in my unhappy brother Julian? No, Emily, I am a man now, and take my own advice; if a parent forbade me, indeed, and reasonably, it would be fit to acquiesce; but knowing, as I have sad cause to know, that none but you, my love, will be sorry for my absence, as for your sake alone that absence is designed, I need take counsel only of us who are here present,—your own sweet eyes, myself, and God who seeth us."

"True, most true, dear Charles; I knew that you judged rightly."

"Moreover, Emmy, secresy is needful for the due fulfilment of my purpose." (Charles little thought how congenial to his nature was that same secresy.) "None but you must know where I

am, or whither I am gone. For if there really is any mystery which the General would conceal from us, be assured he both could and would frustrate all my efforts if he knew of my design. The same ship that carried me out would convey an emissary from him, and nurse Mackie never could be found by me. I must go then secretly, and, for our peace sake, soon; how dear to me that embassy will be, entirely undertaken in my darling Emmy's cause!"

"But—but, Charles, what if Julian, in your absence—"

"Hark, my own betrothed! while I am near you,—and I say it not of threat, but as in the sight of One who has privileged me to be your protector,—you are safe from any serious vexation; and the moment I am gone, fly to my father, tell him openly your fears, and he will scatter Julian's insolence to the winds of heaven."

"Thank you, thank you, wise dear Charles; you have lifted a load from my poor weak woman's heart, that had weighed it down too heavily. I will trust in God more, and dread Julian less. Oh! how I will pray for you when far away."

CHAPTER X.

Aunt Green's Legacy.

At last—at last, Mrs. Green fell ill, and, hard upon the over-ripe age of eighty-seven, seemed likely to drop into the grave: to the unspeakable delight of her expectant relatives. Sooth to say, niece Jane, the soured and long-waiting legatee, had now for years been treating the poor old woman very scurvily: she had lived too long, and had grown to be a burden; notwithstanding that her ample income still kept on the house, and enabled the General to nurse his own East India Bonds right comfortably. But still the old aunt would not die, and as they sought not her, nor her's (quite contrary to St. Paul's disinterestedness), she was looked upon in the light of an incumbrance, on her own property and in her own house. Mrs. Tracy longed to throw off the yoke of dependence, and made small secret of the hatred of the fetter: for the old woman grew so deaf and blind, that there could be no risk at all either in speaking one's mind, or in thoroughly neglecting her.

However, now that the harvest of hope appeared so near, the legatee renewed her old attentions: Death was a guest so very welcome to the house, that it is no wonder his arrival was hourly expected with buoyant cheerfulness, and a something in the mask of kindliness: but I suspect that lamb-skin concealed a very wolf. So, Mrs. Tracy tenderly inquired of the doctor, and the doctor shook his head; and other doctors came to help, and shook their heads together. The patient still grew worse: O brightening prospect: though, now and then, a cordial draught seemed tc revive her so alarmingly, that Mrs. Tracy, affectionately urging that the stimulants would be too exciting for the poor dear sufferer's nerves, induced Dr. Graves to discontinue them. Then, those fearful scintillations in her lamp of life grew fortunately

duller, and the nurse was by her bed-side night and day; and the old aunt became more and more peevish, and was more and more spoken of by the Tracy family,—in her possible hearing, as "that dear old soul,"—out of it, "that vile old witch."

Charles, to be sure, was an exception in all this, as he ever was: for he took on him the Christian office of reading many prayers to the poor decaying creature, and (only that his father would not hear of such a thing) desired to have got the vicar to assist him. Emily also, full of sympathy, and disinterested care, would watch the fretful patient, hour after hour, in those long dull nights of pain; and the poor old perishing sinner loved her coming, for she spoke to her the words of hope and resignation. Whether that sweet missionary, scarcely yet a convert from her own dark creed—(Alas! the Amina had offered unto Juggernaut, and Emily of the strong hill-fort had scarcely heard of any Truer God; and the fair girl was a woman-grown before, in her first earthly love, she also came to know the mercies Heaven has in store for us), whether unto any lasting use she prayed and reasoned with that hard dried heart, none but the Omniscient can tell. Let us hope: let us hope; for the fretful voice was stilled, and the cloudy forehead brightened, and the haggard eyes looked cheerfully to meet the inevitable stroke of death. Thus in wisdom and in charity, in patience and in faith, that gentle pair of lovers comforted the dying soul.

However, days rolled away, and Aunt Green lingered on still, tenaciously clinging unto life: until one morning early, she felt so much better, that she insisted on being propped up by pillows, and seeing all the household round her bed to speak to them. So up came every one, in no small hope of legacies, and what the lawyers call "donationes mortis causâ."

The General was at her bed's-head, with, I am ashamed to say, perhaps unconsciously, a countenance more ridiculous than lugubrious; though he tried to subdue the buoyancy of hope, and to put on looks of decent mourning: on the other side, the long expectant legatee, niece Jane, prudently concealed her questionable grief behind a scented pocket-handkerchief. Julian held somewhat aloof, for the scene was too depressing for his taste: so he affected to read a prayer-book, wrong way up, with his tongue in

his cheek: Charles, deeply solemnized at the near approach of death, knelt at the poor invalid's bedside; and Emily stood by, leaning over her, suffused in tears. At the further corners of the bed, might be seen an old servant or two; and Mrs. Green's butler and coachman, each a forty years' fixture, presented their grey heads at the bottom of the room, and really looked exceedingly concerned.

Mrs. Green addressed them first, in her feeble broken manner: "Grant,—and John,—good and faithful,—thank you, thank you both; and you too, kind Mrs. Lloyd, and Sally, and Nurse,—What's-your-name: give them the packets, Nurse,—all marked,—first drawer, desk: there, there,—God bless you—good,—faithful."

The old servants, full of sorrow at her approaching loss, were comforted too: for a kind word, and a hundred pound note apiece, made amends for much bereavement: the sick-nurse found her gift was just a tithe of their's and recognized the difference both just and kind.

"Niece Jane,—you've waited—long—for—this day: my will—rewards you."

"O dear, dear aunt, pray don't talk so; you 'll recover yet, pray, pray don't:" she pretended to drown the rest in sorrow, but winked at her husband over the handkerchief.

"Julian;" the precious youth attempted to look miserable, and came as called: "you will find—I have remembered—you, Julian." So he winked, too, at his mother, and tried to blubber a "thank you."

"Charles, where 's Charles? give me your hand, Charles dear,—let me feel your face: here, Charles,—a little pocket-book,—good lad,—good lad. There 's Emily, too,—dear child, she came—too late,—I forgot her, I forgot her! General,—give her half,—half—if you love—love—Emi—"

All at once her jaw dropped; her eyes, which had till now been preternaturally bright, filmed over; her head fell back upon the pillow; and the rich old aunt was dead.

Julian gave a shout that might have scared the parting spirit!

Really, the General was shocked, and Mrs. Tracy too; and the servants murmured "shame, shame!" poor Charles hid his

face; Emily looked up indignantly; but Julian asked, with an oath, "Where 's the good of being hypocrites?" and then added, "now, mother, let us find the will."

Then the nurse went to close the dim glazed eyes;—and the other sorrowing domestics slunk away; and Charles led Emily out of the chamber of death, saddened and shocked at such indecent haste.

Meanwhile, the hopeful trio rummaged every drawer,—tumbled out the mingled contents of boxes, desk, and escritoire;—still, no will, no will: and at last the nurse, who more than once had muttered, "Shame on you all," beneath her breath, said,—

"If you want the will it's under her pillow: but don't disturb her yet, poor thing."

Julian's rude hand had already thrust aside the lifeless yielding head, and clutched the will: the father and mother,—though humbled and wonder-stricken at his daring,—gathered round him; and he read aloud, boldly and steadily to the end, though with scowling brow, and many curses interjectional.

"In the name of God, Amen. I, Constance Green, make this my last will and testament. Forasmuch as my niece, Jane Tracy, has watched and waited for my death these two and twenty years, I leave her all the shoes, slippers, and goloshes, whereof I may happen to die possessed: item, I leave Julian, her son, my 'Whole Duty of Man,' convinced that he is deficient in it all: item, I confirm all the gifts which I intend to make upon my death-bed: item, forasmuch as General Tracy, my niece's husband, on his return from abroad, greeted me with much affection, I bequeath and give to him five thousand pounds' worth of Exchequer bills, now in my banker's hands; and appoint him my sole executor. As to my landed property, it will all go, in course of law, to my heir, Samuel Hayley, and may he and his long enjoy it. And as to the remainder of my personal effects, including nine thousand pounds Bank stock, my Dutch fives, and other matters, whereof I may die possessed (seeing that my relatives are rich enough without my help), I give and bequeath the same, subject as hereinbefore stated, to the trustees, for the time being, of the Westminster Lying-in Hospital, in trust, for the purposes of that charitable institution. In witness where-

of, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 13th day of May, 1840.

"CONSTANCE GREEN."

"Duly signed, sealed, and delivered:—d—nation!" was Julian's brief epilogue;—"General, let's burn it."

"You can, if you please, Mr. Julian," interposed the nurse, who had secretly enjoyed all this, "and if you like to take the consequences; but, as each of the three witnesses has the will sealed up in copy, and the poor deceased there took pains to sign them all, perhaps—"

This settled the affair: and the discomfited expectants made a precipitate retreat. As the General, however, got vastly more than he expected, for his individual merits; and seeing that he loved Emily as much as he hated both Julian and his wife, he really felt well-pleased upon the whole, and took on him the duties of executor with cheerfulness. So they buried aunt Green as soon as might be.

CHAPTER XI.

Preparations, and Departure.

CHARLES'S pocket-book was full of clean bank notes, fifteen hundred pounds' worth: it contained also a diamond ring, and a lock of silvery hair; the latter a proof of affectionate sentiment in the kind old soul, that touched him at the heart.

"And now, my Emmy, the way is clear to us; Providence has sent me this, that I may right you, dearest: and it will be wise in us to say nothing of our plans. Avoid inquiries,—for I did not say conceal or falsify facts: but, while none but you, love, heed of my departure, and whilst I go for our sakes alone, we need not invite disappointment by open-mouthed publicity. To those who love me, Emmy, I am frank and free; but with those who love us not, there is a wisdom, and a justice, in concealment. They do not deserve confidence, who will not extend to us their sympathy. None but yourself must know whither I am bound; and, after some little search for curiosity's sake, when a week is past and gone, no soul will care for me of those at home. With you, I will manage to communicate by post, directing my letters to Mrs. Sainsbury, at Oxton: I will prepare her for it. She knows my love for you, and how they try to thwart us: but even she, however trustworthy, need not be told my destination yet awhile, until 'India' appears upon the postmark. How glad will you be, dearest one, how happy in our secret,—to read my heart's own thoughts, when I am far away, far away, clearing up mine Emmy's cares, and telling her how blest I feel in ministering to her happiness!"

Such was the substance of their talk, while counting out the pocket-book.

Charles's remaining preparations were simple enough, now his purse was flush of money: he resolved upon taking from his

home no luggage whatever: preferring to order down, from an outfitting house in London, a regular kit of cadet's necessaries, to wait for him at the Europe Hotel, Plymouth, on a certain day in the ensuing week. So that, burdened only with his Emily's miniature, and his pocket-book of bank notes, he might depart quietly some evening, get to Plymouth in a preconcerted way, by chaise or coach, before the morrow morning; thence, a boat to meet the ship off-shore, and then hey, for the Indies!

It was as well-devised a scheme as could possibly be planned: though its secresy, especially with a mother in the case, may be a moot point as to the abstract moral thereof: nevertheless, concretely, the only heart his so mysterious absence would have pained was made aware of all: then, again, secresy had been the atmosphere of his daily life, the breath of his education; and he too sorely knew his mother would rejoice at the departure, and Julian, too,—all the more certainly, as both brothers were now rivals professed, for the hand of Emily Warren: as to the General, he might, or he might not, smoke an extra cheroot in the excitement of his wonder; and if he cared about it anyways more tragically than tobacco might betray, Emily knew how to comfort him.

With respect to other arrangements, Emmy furnished Charles with letters to certain useful people at Madras, and in particular to the "somebody" who looked after Mrs. Mackie: so, the mystery was easy of access, and he doubted not of overcoming, on the spot, every unseen difficulty. The plan of leaving all luggage behind, a capital idea, would enable him to go forth freely and unshackled, with an ordinary air, in hat and great coat, as for an evening's walk; and was quite in keeping with the natural reserve of his whole character,—a bad habit of secresy, which he probably inherited from his father, the lieutenant of old times. And yet, for all the wisdom, and mystery, and shrewd settling of the plan, its accomplishment was as nearly as possible most fatally defeated.

The important evening arrived; for the Indiaman—it was our old friend Sir William Elphinston,—would be off Plymouth, next morning: the goods had been, for a day or two, safely deposited at the Europe, as per invoice, all paid: the lovers, in this last,

this happiest, yet by far the saddest of their stolen interviews, had exchanged vows and kisses, and upon the beach, beneath those friendly cliffs, had commended one another to their Father in Heaven. They had returned to the unsocial circle of home; all was fixed; the clock struck nine: and Charles, accidentally squeezing Emily's hand, rose to leave the tea-table.

"Where are you going, Mr. Charles?"

"I am going out, Julian."

"Thank you, sir! I knew that, but whither? General, I say, here's Charles going to serenade somebody by moonlight."

The brandy-sodden parent, scarcely conscious, said something about his Infernal Majesty; and, "What then?—let him go, can't you?"

"Well, Julian dear, perhaps your brother will not mind you going with him; particularly as Emily stays at home with me."

This Mrs. Tracy spoke archly, intended as a hint to induce Julian to remain:—but he had other thoughts,—and simply said, in an ill-tempered tone of voice, "Done, Charles."

It was a dilemma for our escaping hero; but glancing a last look at Emily, he departed, and walked on some way as quietly as might be with Julian by his side: thinking, perhaps, he would soon be tired; and suffering him to fancy, if he would, that Charles was bound either on some amorous pilgrimage, or some charitable mission. But they left Burleigh behind them,—and got upon the common,—and passed it by, far out of sight and out of hearing,—and were skirting the high banks of the darkly-flowing Mullet,—and still there was Julian sullenly beside him. In vain Charles had tried, by many gentle words, to draw him into common conversation: Julian would not speak, or only gave utterance to some hinted phrase of insult: his brow was even darker than usual, and night was coming on apace, and he still tramped steadily along beside his brother, digging his sturdy stick into the clay, for very spite's sake. At length, as they yet walked along the river's side in that unfrequented place, Julian said, on a sudden, in a low strange tone, as if keeping down some rising rage within him,

"Mr. Charles, you love Emily Warren."

"Well, Julian, and who can help loving her?"

It was innocently said; but still a maddening answer, for he loved her too.

"And, sirrah," the brother hoarsely added: "she,—she does not,—does not—hate you, sir, as I do."

"My good Julian, pray do not be so violent; I cannot help it if the dear girl loves me."

"But I can, though," roared Julian with an oath, and lifted up his stick,—it was nearer like a club,—to strike his brother.

"Julian, Julian, what are you about? Good heavens! you would not,—you dare not,—give over,—unhand me, brother; what have I done, that you should strike me? Oh! leave me,—leave me,—pray."

"Leave you? I will leave you," the villain almost shouted, and smote him to the ground with his lead-loaded stick. It was a blow that must have killed him, but for the interposing hat, now battered down upon his bleeding head. Charles, at length thoroughly aroused, though his foe must be a brother, struggled with unusual strength in self-preserving instinct, wrested the club from Julian's hand, and stood on the defensive.

Julian was staggered: and, after a moment's irresolution, drawing a pistol from his pocket, said, in a terribly calm voice,

"Now, sir! I have looked for such a meeting many days,—alone, by night, with you! I would not willingly draw trigger, for the noise might bring down other folks upon us, out of Oxton yonder: but, drop that stick, or I fire."

Charles was noble enough, without another word, to fling the club into the river: it was not fear of harm, but fear of sin, that made him trust himself defenceless to a brother, a twin brother, in the dark: he could not be so base, a murderer, a fratricide! Oh! most unhallowed thought! Save him from this crime, good God! Then, instantaneously reflecting, and believing he decided for the best, when he saw the ruffian glaring on him with exulting looks, as upon an unarmed rival at his mercy, with no man near to stay the deed, and none but God to see it, Charles resolved to seek safety from so terrible a death in flight.

Oxton was within one mile; and clearly, this was not like flying from danger as a coward, but fleeing from attempted crime, as a brother and a Christian. Julian snatched at him to catch

him as he passed ; and, failing in this, rushed after him. It was a race for life! and they went like the wind, for two hundred yards, along that muddy high-banked walk.

Suddenly, Charles slipped upon the clay, that he fell; and Julian, with a savage howl, leapt upon him heavily.

Poor youth, he knew that death was nigh, and only uttered, "God forgive you, brother ; Oh! spare me,—or if not me, spare yourself,—Julian, Julian !"

But the monster was determined. Exerting the whole force of his herculean frame, he seized his scarce-resisting victim as he lay, and, lifting him up like a child, flung his own twin brother head foremost into that darkly flowing current!

There was one piercing cry,—a splash,—a struggle; and again nothing broke upon the silent night, but the murmur of that swingeing tide, as the Mullet hurried eddying to the sea.

Julian listened a minute or two, flung some stones at random into the river, and then hastily ran back to Burleigh, feeling like a Cain.

CHAPTER XII.

The Escape.

But the overruling hand of Him, whose aid that victim had invoked, was now stretched forth to save! and the strong-flowing tide, that ran too rapidly for Charles to sink in it, was commissioned from on High to carry him into an angle of that tortuous stream, where he clung by instinct to the bushes. Silence was his wisdom, while the murderer was near: and so long as Julian's footsteps echoed on the banks, Charles stirred not, spoke not, but only silently thanked God for his wonderful deliverance. However, the footsteps quickly died away, though heard far off clattering amid the still and listening night; and Charles, thankfully, no less than cautiously, drew himself out of the stream, very little harmed beyond a drenching: for the waters had recovered him at once from the effects of that desperate blow.

It was with a sense of exultation, freedom, independence, that he now hastened scatheless on his way; dripping garments mattered nothing, nor mud, nor the loss of his demolished hat: the pocket-book was safe, and Emmy's portrait, (how he kissed it, then!) and luckily a travelling cap was in his greatcoat pocket: so with a most buoyant feeling of animal delight, as well as of religious gratitude, he sped merrily once more upon his secret expedition. Thank heaven! Emmy could not know the peril he had past: and wretched Julian would now have dreadful reason of his own for this mysterious absence: and it was a pleasant thing to trudge along so freely in the starlight on the private embassy of love. Happy Charles! I know not if ever more exhilarated feelings blessed the youth; they made him trip along the silent road, in a gush of joyfulness, at the rate of some six miles an hour; I know not if ever such delicious thoughts of Emily's attachment, and those gorgeous mysteries in India, of adventure, enterprise, escape, had heretofore caused his heart to bound so lightsomely within him, like some elastic spring. I know not if

ever strong reliance upon Providential care, more earnest prayers, praises, intercessions (for poor Julian, too), were offered on the altar of his soul: happy Charles!

So he went on and on—long past Oxton, and Eyemouth, and Surbiton, and over the ferry, and through the sleeping turnpikes, and past the bridge, and along the broad high-road, until grey morning's dawn revealed the suburbs of Plymouth.

Of course he missed the mail by which he had intended to have gone,—for Julian's dread act delayed him.

Long before his journey's end, his clothes were thoroughly dried, and violent exercise had shaken off all possible rheumatic consequence of that fearful plunge beneath the waters: five and twenty miles in four hours and three quarters, is a tolerable recipe for those who have tumbled into rivers. We must recollect that he had gone as quick as he could, for fear of being late, now the coach had passed. At a little country inn, he brushed, and washed, and made toilet as well as he was able, took a glass of good Cognac both hot and strong; and felt more of a man than ever.

Then, having loitered awhile and well remembered Emily in his prayers, at about eight in the morning he presented himself amongst his luggage at the Europe in gentlemanly trim, and soon got all on board the pilot boat, to meet the Indiaman just outside the breakwater. We may safely leave him there, happy, hopeful Charles! Sanguine for the future, exulting in the present, and thankful for the past: already has he poured out all his joys before that Friend who loves her too, and invoked His blessing on a scheme so well designed, so providentially accomplished.

I had almost forgotten Julian: wretched, hardened man, and how fared he? The moment he had flung his brother into that dark stream, and the waters closed above him greedily that he was gone,—gone for ever, he first threw in stones to make a noise like life upon the stream, but that cheatery was only for an instant: he was alone, a murderer, alone! the horrors of silence, solitude, and guilt, seized upon him like three furies: so his quick retreating walk became a running; and the running soon was wild and swift for fear; and ever as he ran, that piercing scream came upon the wind behind, and hooted him: his head swam, his

eyes saw terrible sights, his ears heard terrible sounds,—and he scoured into quiet sleeping Burleigh like a madman. However, by some strange good luck, not even did the slumbering watchman see him: so he got indoors as usual with the latch key (it was not the first time he had been out at night), crept up quietly, and hid himself in his own chamber.

And how did he spend those hours of guilty solitude? in terrors? in remorse? in misery? Not he: Julian was too wise to sit and think, and in the dark too; but he lit both reading lamps to keep away the gloom, and smoked and drank till morning's dawn to stupify his conscience.

Then, to make it seem all right, he went down to breakfast as usual, though anything but sober, and met unflinchingly his mother's natural question,

"Good morning, Julian,—where's Charles?"

"How should I know, mother; isn't he up yet?"

"No, my dear; and what is more, I doubt if he came home last night."

"Hollo, Master Charles; pretty doings these, Mr. Sabbath teacher; so he slept out, ey, mother?"

"I don't know,—but where did you leave him, Julian?"

"Who, I? did I go out with him? Oh! yes, now I recollect: let 's see, we strolled together midway to Oxton, and, as he was going somewhat further, there I left him?"

How true the words, and yet how terribly false their meaning!

"Dear me, that 's very odd, isn't it, General?"

"Not at all, ma'am, not at all; leave the lad alone, he 'll be back by dinner-time: I didn't think the boy had so much spirit."

Emily, to whom the General's hint was Greek, looked up cheerfully; and in her own glad mind chuckled at her Charles's bold adventure.

But the day passed off, and they sent out men to seek for him: and another,—and all Burleigh was astir: and another,—and the coast guards from Lyme to Plymouth Sound searched every hole and corner: and another,—when his mother wept five minutes: and another,—when the wonder was forgotten.

However, they did not put on mourning for the truant: he might turn up yet: perhaps he was at Oxford.

Emily had not much to do in comforting the General for his dear son's loss; it clearly was a gain to him, and he felt far freer than when wisdom's eye was on him. Charles had been too keen for father, mother, and brother; too good, too amiable: he saw their ill, condemned it by his life, and showed their dark too black against his brightness. The unnatural deficiency of mother's love had not been overrated: Julian had all her heart; and she felt only obliged to the decamping Charles for leaving Emily so free and clear to his delightful brother. She never thought him dead: death was a repulsive notion at all times to her: no doubt he would turn up again some day. And Julian joked with her about that musty proverb "a bad penny."

As to our dear heroine, she never felt so happy in all her life before as now, even when her Charles had been beside her; for within a day of his departure he had written her a note full of affection, hope, and gladness; assuring her of his health, and wealth, and safe arrival on board the Indiaman. The noble-hearted youth never said one single word about his brother's crime: but he did warn his Emmy to keep close beside the General. This note she got through Mrs. Sainsbury; that invalid lady at Oxton, who never troubled herself to ask or hear one word beyond her own little world, a certain physic-corner-cupboard.

And thou, poor miserable man, thou fratricide in mind, and to thy best belief in act, how drags on now the burden of thy life? For a day or two, spirits and segars muddled his brain, and so kept thoughts away: but within a while they came on him too piercingly, and Julian writhed beneath those scorpion stings of hot and keen remorse: and when the coast-guards dragged the Mullet, how that caitiff trembled! and when nothing could be found, how he wondered fearingly! The only thing the wretched man could do, was to loiter, day after day, and all day long, upon that same high path which skirts the tortuous stream. Fascinated there by hideous recollections, he could not leave the spot for hours: and his soft-headed romantic mother, noticing these deep abstractions, blessed him, for her Julian was now in love with Emily!

CHAPTER XIII.

News of Charles.

Ay,— in love with Emily! Fiercely now did Julian pour his thoughts that way; if only hoping to forget murder in another strong excitement. Julian listened to his mother's counsels; and that silly cheated woman playfully would lean upon his arm, like a huge coy confidante, and fill his greedy ears (that heard her gladly for very holiday's sake from fearful apprehensions), with lover's hopes, lover's themes, his Emily's perfection. Delighted mother, how proud and pleased was she! quite in her own element, fanning dear Julian's most sentimental flame, and scheming for him interviews with Emily.

It required all her skill: for the girl clung closely to her guardian: he, unconscious Argus, never tired of her company; and she, remembering dear Charles's hint, and dreading to be left alone with Julian, would persist to sit day after day at her books, music, or needle-work in the study, charming General Tracy by her pretty Hindoo songs. With him she walked out, and with him she came in; she would read to him for hours, whether he snored or listened; and, really, both mother and son were several long weeks before their scheming could come to anything. A *tête-à-tête* between Julian and Emily appeared as impossible to manage, as collision between Jupiter and Vesta.

However, after some six weeks of this sort of mining and counter-mining (for Emily divined their wishes), all on a sudden one morning the General received a letter that demanded his immediate presence for a day or two in town; something about prize-money at Puttymuddyfudgepoor. Emily was too high-spirited, too delicate in mind, to tell her guardian of fears which never might be realized; and so, with some forebodings, but a cheerful trust, too, in a Providence above her, she saw the General off

without a word, though not without a tear; he too, that stern close man, was moved: it was strange to see them love each other so.

The moment he was gone, she discreetly kept her chamber for the day, on plea of sickness; she had cried very heartily to see him leave her,—he had never yet left her once since she could recollect,—and thus she really had a headache, and a bad one.

Next morning, she would gladly have found any just excuse for absence from the breakfast table, fever, smallpox, cholera, anything: for Julian's attentions were more dreaded than them all. But she was quite recovered now, and a ship-letter, that morning arrived from Charles, all well, and merrily bounding over the salt sea, had put her in such high spirits, that with something of just pride and matronly fortitude, she determined to confront Mrs. Tracy and her son. Verily, her frank and cheerly trustfulness quite staggered the conspiring pair: for Emily had been strengthened by prayerful trust towards God, and felt happy in her well requited love.

She was the first to speak. "Good-morrow, Mrs. Tracy; how do you do, Julian? I am afraid to say, you don't look quite so well as usual."

Indeed he did not; for ghastly fears racked him, and unsatisfied desires: he was pale, wasted, miserable. So he awkwardly answered her address with a common "how d' ye do?"

"Julian has lost his spirits lately very much, my dear: I dare say you can guess the cause?" As if either of them could!

"The cause, Mrs. Tracy? I am sure I cannot; at least," she added somewhat mischievously, "unless he is anxious about Charles."

"What about Charles?" hurriedly asked Julian in a wild and nervous way.

"Why, we all know he is missing, don't we, Julian? and has been for these six weeks: I am sure it does you credit to seem so altered since he went."

"Went? whither?" earnestly asked the mother, who really had begun to find out that she loved her now lost child: "whither, dearest Emily? oh do you know? do you know? tell me, tell me."

To Emily's great surprise, Mrs. Tracy shed real tears of evident

affection and sorrow; though a silly and a weak one, she was a a mother still, and Charles a son, although too good for her.

Accordingly Emily, in the fulness of her sympathy, and with some natural exultation of spirits now that Charles had got a fair start (he was at the Cape by this time), gaily answered,

"Dear Mrs. Tracy, I rejoice to be able to assure you, that you need not entertain a fear or doubt of Charles's welfare; though I am a woman, I can keep a secret you see;" the dear girl was blabbing it all the while, quite unconscious of her contradiction; "Charles is gone to India to find out who I am, and I heard from him this morning,—all well at St. Helena!"

Julian Tracy gave such a start, that he knocked off a cheffonier of rare china and glass standing at his elbow; and the smash of mandarins and porcelain gods would have been enough, at any other time, to have driven his mother crazy.

"Charles alive?" shouted he.

"Yes, Julian, why not? You saw him off you know: cannot you remember?"

Now to that guilty wretch's mind the fearful notion instantaneously occurred, that Emily Warren was in some strange wild way bantering him; she knew his dreadful secret,—"he *had* seen him off." He trembled like an aspen as she looked on him.

"Oh yes, he remembered, certainly; but—but where was her letter?"

"Never mind that, Julian; you surely would not read another person's letters, Monsieur le Chevalier Bayard?"

Emily was as gay at heart that morning as a skylark, and her innocent pleasantry proved her strongest shield. Julian dared not ask to see the letter,—scarcely dared to hope she had one, and yet did not know what to think. As to any love scene now it was quite out of the question, notwithstanding all his mother's hints and management; a new exciting thought entirely filled him: was he a Cain, a fratricide, or not? was Charles alive after all? And, for once in his life, Julian had some repentant feelings; for thrilling hope was nigh to cheer his gloom.

It really seemed as if Emily, sweet innocent, could read his inmost thoughts; "At any rate," observed she playfully, "Bayard may take the postman's privilege, and see the outside."

With that she produced the ship letter that had put her in such spirits, legibly dated some twenty-two days ago. Yes, Charles's hand, sure enough! Julian could swear to it among a thousand. And he fainted dead away.

What an astonishing event! how Mrs. Tracy praised her noble-spirited boy! How the bells rang! and hot water, and cold water, and salts, and rubbings, and eau de cologne, and all manner of delicate attentions, long sustained, at length contributed to Julian's restoration. Moreover, even Emily was agreeably surprised; she had never seen him in so amiable a light before; this was all feeling, all affection for his brother, her dear, dear Charles. And when Mrs. Tracy heard what Emily said of Julian's feeling heart, she became positively triumphant; not half so much at Charles's safety, and all that, as at Julian's burst of feeling. She was quite right, after all; he was worthy to be her favorite, and she felt both flattered and obliged to him for fainting dead away. "Yes, yes, my dear Miss Warren, depend upon it Julian has fine feelings, and a good heart." And Emily began to condemn both Charles and herself for lack of charity, and to think so too.

CHAPTER XIV.

The tête-à-tête

No sooner had "dear Julian" recovered, which he really had not quite accomplished until the day had begun to wear away (so great a shock had that intelligence of Charles been to his guilty mind), than the gratified and prudent mother fancied this a famous opportunity to leave the young couple to themselves. It was after dinner, when they had retired to the drawing-room; and I will say that Emily had never seemed so favorably disposed towards that rough but generous heart before. So then, on some significant pretence, well satisfied her favorite was himself again, as bold, and black, and boisterous as ever, the masculine mother kissed her hand to them, as a fat fairy might be supposed to do, and operatically tripped away, coyly bidding Emily "take care of Julian till she should come back again."

The momentary gleam of good which glanced across that bad man's heart has faded away hours ago; his repentant thoughts had been occasioned more from the sudden relief he experienced at running now no risks for having murdered, than for any better feeling towards his brother, or any humbler notions of himself. Nay, a strong reaction occurred in his ideas the moment he had seen his brother's writing; and when he fainted, he fainted from the struggle in his mind of manifold exciting causes, such as these;—hatred, jealousy, what he called love, though a lower name befitted it, and vexation that his brother was—not dead. Oh mother, mother, if your poor weak head had but been wise enough to read that heart, would you still have loved it as you do? Alas,—it is a deep lesson in human nature this,—she would! for Mrs. General Tracy was one of those obstinate yet superficial characters whom no reason can convince that they are wrong, no power can oblige to confess themselves mistaken. She re-

joiced to hear him called "her very image;" and predominant vanity in the large coquette extended to herself at second-hand: self was her idol substance, and its delightful shadow was this mother's son.

The moment Mrs. Tracy left the room, Julian perceived his opportunity: Charles, detested rival, far away at sea; the guardian gone to London; Emily in an unusual flow of affability and kindness, and he—alone with her. Rashly did he bask his soul in her delicious beauty, deliberately drinking deep of that intoxicating draught. Giving the rein to passion, he suffered that tumultuous steed to hurry him whither it would, in mad unbridled course. He sat so long silently gazing at her with the lack-lustre eyes of low and dull desire, that Emily, quite thrown off her guard by that amiable fainting for his brother, addressed him in her innocent kind-heartedness,

"Are you not recovered yet, dear Julian?"

The effect was instantaneous: scarcely crediting his ears that heard her call him "dear," his eyes, that saw her winning smile upon him, he started from his chair, and trembling with agitation, flung himself at her feet, to Emily's unqualified astonishment.

"Why, Julian, what's the matter?—unhand me, sir! let go?" for he had got hold of her wrist.

The passionate youth seized her hand,—that one with Charles's ring upon it,—and would have kissed it wildly with polluting lips, had she not shrieked suddenly "Help! help!"

Instantly his other hand was roughly dashed upon her mouth,—so roughly that it almost knocked her backwards,—and the blood flowed from her wounded lip; but, by a preternatural effort, the indignant Indian queen hurled the ruffian from her, flew to the bell, and kept on ringing violently.

In less than half a minute all the household was around her, headed by the startled Mrs. Tracy, who had all the while been listening in the other drawing-room: butler, footmen, housemaids, ladies'-maids, cook, scullions, and all rushed in, thinking the house was on fire.

No need to explain by a word. Emily, radiant in imperial

charms, stood, like inspired Cassandra, flashing indignation from her eyes at the cowering caitiff on the floor. The mother, turning all manner of colors, dropped on her knees to "poor Julian's" assistance, affecting to believe him taken ill. But Emily Warren, whose insulted pride vouchsafed not a word to that guilty couple, soon undeceived all parties, by addressing the butler in a voice tremulous and broken,—

"Mr. Saunders,—be so good—as to go—to Sir Abraham Tamworth's,—in the square,—and request of him—a night's—protection—for a poor,—defenceless, insulted woman!"

She could hardly utter the last words for choking tears: but, immediately battling down her feelings, added, with the calmness of a heroine,—

"You are a father, Mr. Saunders,—set all this before Sir Abraham strongly, but delicately.

"Footmen! so long as that wretch is in the room, protect me, as you are men."

And the stately beauty placed herself between the two liveried lacqueys, as Zenobia in the middle of her guards.

"Marguerite!"—the pretty little Française tripped up to her, —"wipe this blood from my face."

Beautiful, insulted creature; I thought that I looked upon some wounded Boadicea, with her daughters extracting the arrow from her cheek.

"And now, kind Charlotte, fetch my cloak; and follow me to Prospect House, with what I may require for the night. Till the General's return, I stay not here one minute."

Then, without a syllable, or a look of leave-taking, the wise and noble girl,—doubtless unconsciously remembering her early Hindoo braveries, the lines of match-lock men, the bowing slaves, the processions, and her jewelled state of old,—marched away in magnificent beauty, accompanied in silence by the whole astonished household.

Mrs. Tracy and her son were left alone: the silly, silly mother thought him "hardly used." Julian, whose natural effrontery had entirely deserted him, looked like what he was,—a guilty coward: and the mother, who had pampered up her "fine high-

spirited son" to his full-grown criminality by a foolish education, really,—when she had time to think of anything but him,—was excessively frightened. The General would be back to-morrow, and then,—and then!—she dreaded to picture that explosion of his wrath.

CHAPTER XV.

Satisfaction.

SIR ABRAHAM TAMWORTH, G.C.B.,—a fine old Admiral of the White, who somewhat looked down upon the rank of General, H.E.I.C.S.,—was astonished, as well he might be, at Mr. Saunders, and his message: and, of course, most gladly acquiesced in acting as poor Emily's protector. Accordingly, however jealous Lady Tamworth and her daughters might heretofore have felt of that bright beauty at the balls, they were now all genuine sympathy, indignation, and affection. Emily, I need hardly say, went straight up stairs to have her cry out.

"Whom are you writing to, George, in such a hurry?" asked the Admiral, of a fine moustachioed son, George St. Vincent Tamworth, of the Royal Horse Guards, who had just got six months' leave of absence for the sake of marriage with his cousin.

The gallant soldier tossed a billet to his father, who mounted his spectacles, and quietly read it at the lamp.

"Captain Tamworth desires Mr. Julian Tracy's company tomorrow morning, at seven o'clock, in the third meadow on the Oxton Road. The Captain brings a friend with him; also pistols and a surgeon; and he desires Mr. Tracy to do the like. Prospect House. Thursday evening."

"So, George, you consider him a gentleman, do you? I am afraid it's a poor compliment that to our fair young friend." And he quietly crumpled up the challenge in his iron hand.

"Really, sir!—you surprise me;—pardon me, but I will send that note: mustn't I chastise the fellow for this insufferable outrage?"

"No doubt, George, no doubt of it at all: when a lady is insulted, and a man (not to say a Queen's officer) stands by without taking notice of it, he deserves whipping at the cart's-tail, and Coventry for life. I've no patience, boy, with such mean meek-

ness, as putting up with bullying insolence when a woman's in the case. Let a man show moral courage, if he can and will, in his own affront; I honor him who turns on his heel from commom personal insult, and only wish my own old blood was cool enough to do so: but the mother, wife, and sister, ay, George, and the poor defenceless one, be she lady, peasant, or menial, who comes to us for safety in a woman's dress, we must take up their quarrel, or we are not men!—"

"Don't interrupt him, George," uxoriously suggested Lady Tamworth, "your father hasn't done talking yet." For George was getting terribly impatient; he knew, from sad experience, how much the Admiral was given to prosing. However, the oration soon proceeded to our Captain's entire satisfaction, after his progenitor had paused awhile for breath's sake in his eloquence.

"—Take up their quarrel, or we are not men. Nevertheless, boy, I cannot see the need of pistols. The only conceivable case for violent redress, is woman's wrong: and he who wrongs a woman cannot be a gentleman; therefore, ought not to be met on equal terms. For other causes of duello, as hot-headed speeches, rudenesses, or slights, forgive, forbear to fan the flame, and never be above apologizing: but, in an outrage such as this, let a fine-built fellow, such as you are, George (and the women should show wisdom in their choice of champions),—let a man, and a Queen's officer as you are, treat this brute Julian Tracy, as a martinet huntsman would a hound thrown out. As for me, boy, I'm going to call on Mrs. Tracy at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning,—and, without presuming to advise a six foot two of a son, I think, —I think, if I were you, I would be dutiful enough to say,—'father, I will accompany you,—and take a horsewhip with me.'"

"Agreed, agreed, sir," replied the well-pleased son, and her ladyship too vouchsafed her approbation.

Emily had gone to bed long ago, or rather to her chamber; where the three Misses Tamworth had been all kindness, curiosity, and consolation. So, Sir Abraham and his lady, now the speech was finished, followed their example of retirement: and the Captain newly blood-knotted his hunting-whip, *con amore*, not to say *con spirito*, overnight.

Nobody will wonder to hear, that when the gallant representa

tives of army and navy called next morning at No. 7, Mrs. Tracy and her son were "not at home:" and of course it would be far too Julian-like a proceeding, for true gentlemen to think of forcing their company on the probably ensconced indwellers. Accordingly, they marched away, without having deigned to leave a card; the Captain taking on himself the duty of perambulating sentinel, while his father proceeded to the library as usual. Judge of the glad surprise, when, within ten minutes, our vindictive George perceived the Admiral coming back again, full-sail, with the mother and son in tow, creeping amicably enough up the terrace. Sir Abraham had given her his arm, and precious Mr. Julian was a little in the rear: for the old folks were talking confidentially.

George St. Vincent, placing his whip in the well-known position of "Cane, a mystery," advanced to meet them; and, just after passing his father, with whom he exchanged a very comfortable glance, discovered that the heroic Julian, who had caught a glimpse of the ill-concealed weapon, was slinking quickly round a corner to avoid him. It was certainly undignified to run, but the gallant Captain did run, nevertheless; and soon caught the coward by the collar.

Then, at arm's length, was the hunting-whip applied, full-swing; up the terrace, and down the parade, and through High-street, and Smith-street, and Oxton-road, and aristocratical Pacton-square, and the well-thronged plebeian market-place; lash, lash, lash, in furious and fast succession on the writhing roaring culprit; to the universal excoriation of Mr. Julian Tracy, and the amazement of an admiring and soon collected crowd, the rank, beauty, and fashion, of Burleigh Singleton. Julian was strong indeed, and a coalheaver in build, but conscience had unnerved him; and the coarse noisy bully always is a coward: therefore, it was a pleasant thing to see, how easy came the Captain's work to him,—he had nothing to do but to lash, lash, lash, double-thonged, like a slavedriver: and, except that he made the caitiff move along, to be a spectacle to man and woman, up and down the town, he might as well, for any difficulty in the deed, have been employed in scarifying a gatepost.

At last, thoroughly exhausted with having inflicted as much

punishment as any three drummers at a soldier's whipping-match, and spying out his "tiger" in the throng, our gallant Avenging Childe tossed the heavy whip to the trim cockaded little man that he might carry home that instrument of vengeance, deliberately wiped his wet mustachios, and giving Julian one last kick, let the fellow part in peace.

CHAPTER XVI.

How Charles fared.

HAVING thus found protectors for poor Emily, and disposed of her assailant to the entire satisfaction of all mankind, let us turn seawards, and take a look at Charles.

Now, "no earthly power,"—as a certain ex-chancellor protested,—shall induce me to do so mean a thing as to open Charles's letters, and spread them forth before the public gaze. Doubtless, they were all things tender, warm, and eloquent; doubtless, they were tinted rosy-hue, with love's own blushes, and made glorious with the golden light of unaffected piety. I only read them my self in a reflected way, by looking into Emily's eyes; and I saw, from their ever-changing radiance, how feelingly he told of his affections; how fervently he poured out all his heart upon the page; how evidently tears and kisses had made many words illegible; how wise, sanguine, happy, and religious, was her own devoted Charles.

Of the trivial incidents of voyaging, his letters said not much: though cheerful and agreeable in his floating prison, with the various exported marrying-maidens and transported civil officers, who constitute the average bulk of Indian cargoes outward bound, Charles mixed but little in their society, seldom danced, seldom smoked, seldom took a hand at whist, or engaged in the conflicts of backgammon. Sharks, storms, waterspouts; the meeting divers vessels, and exchanging post-bags; tar-barrelled Neptune of the Line; Cape Town, with its mountain and the Table-cloth; long-rolling seas; and similar common-places, Charles did not think proper to enlarge upon: no more do I. Life is far too short for all such petty details: and, more pointedly, a wire-drawn book is the just abhorrence of a generous public.

The letters came frequently: for Charles did little else all day but write to Emmy, so as always to be ready with a budget for

the next piece of luck—a home-bound ship. He had many things to teach her yet, sweet student; and it was a beautiful sight to see how her mind expanded as an opening flower before the sun of tenderness and wisdom. Each letter, both in writing and in reading, was the child of many prayers: and even the loveliness of Emily grew more soft, more elevated, "as it had been the face of an angel," when feeding in solitary joy on those effusions of her lover's heart.

Of course, he could not hear from her, until the Overland Mail might haply bring him letters at Madras: so that, as our Irish friends would say, with all her will to tell him of her love, "the reciprocity must needs be all on one side." But Emily did write too; earnestly, happily:—and poured her very heart out in those eloquent burning words. I dare say Charles will get the letter now within a day or two: for the roaring surf of Madras is on the horizon, almost within sight.

Nevertheless, before he gets there, and can read those letters, —precious, precious manuscripts,—it will be my painful duty, as a chronicler of (what might well be) truth, to put the reader in possession of one little hint, which seemed likeliest to wreck the happiness of these two children of affection.

I am Emily's invisible friend: and as the dear girl ran to me one morning, with tears in her eyes, to ask me what I thought of a certain mysterious paragraph, I need not scruple to lay it straight before the reader.

At the end of a voluminous love letter, which I really did not think of prying into, occurred the following postscript, evidently written at the last moment of haste.

"Oh! my precious Emmy, I have just heard the most fearful rumor of ill that could possibly befal us: the Captain of our ship —you will remember Captain Forbes, he knew you and the General well, he said,—has just assured me that—that—! I dare not, cannot write the awful words. Oh! my own Emmy—Heaven grant you be my own!—pray, pray, as I will night and day, that rumor be not true: for if it be, my love, both God and man forbid us ever to meet again! How I wish I could explain it all, or that I had never heard so much, or never written it here and told it you, though thus obscurely: for I can't destroy this letter

now, the ships are just parting company, and there is no time to write another. Yet will I hope, love, against hope. Who knows? through God's good mercy, it may all be cleared up still. If not —if not—strive to forget for ever your unhappy

"CHARLES.

"Perhaps,—O, glorious thought!—nurse Mackie may know better than the Captain after all: and yet he seems so positive: if he is right, there is nothing for us both but Wo! Wo! Wo!"

Now, to say plain truth, when Emily showed me this I looked very blank upon it. That Charles had heard some meddlesome report, which (if true) was to be an insuperable barrier to their future union, struck me at a glimpse. But I had not the heart to hint it to her; and only encouraged hope,—hope, in God's help, through the means of Mrs. Mackie and her papers.

As for the poor girl herself, she asked me, in much humility, and with many sobs, if I did not fear that her Hindoo mystery was this:—she was the vilest of the vile, a Pariah, an outcast, whose very presence is contamination!

Beautiful, loving, heavenly-hearted creature! so humble in the midst of her majestic loveliness! how touching was the thought, that she thus readily acquiesced in any the deepest humiliation Holy Providence had seen fit to send her; and though the sentence would have crushed her happiness for ever, till the day of death, that she could still look up and say, "Be it to thine handmaid even as thou wilt."

As I had no better method of explaining the matter, and as her infantine reminiscences and prejudices about caste were strong, I even let her think so, if she would: it was a far better alternative than my own sad thoughts about the business: and, however painful was the process, it was something consolatory to observe, that this voluntary humiliation mellowed and chastened her own character, subduing tropical fires, and tempering the virgin gold by meekness.

Oh! Charles, Charles, my poor fellow, "who have cast your all upon a die, and must abide the issue of the throw," I most fervently hope that gossiping Captain Forbes spoke falsely: it is

a comfort to reflect that the world is often very liberal in attributing the honors of paternity to some who really do not deserve them. And if a rich old bachelor looks kindly on a foundling, is it not pure malice on that sole account of charity to hail him father? Besides,—there's nurse Mackie.—Speed to Madras, poor youth, and keep your courage up.

CHAPTER XVII.

The General's Return.

In a most unwonted flow of animal spirits, and an entire affability which restored him at once to the rank of a communicative creature, General Tracy came back on Friday night. He had met with marvellous prosperity; for Hancock's had been paying off the prize-money; and his own lion's share, as General, in the easy process of dethroning half a dozen diamond-hilted Rajahs and Nabobs, amounted to something like four lacs of rupees, nearly half a crore! Such a flush of wealth, and he was rich already without it, exhilarated the bilious old gentleman so strangely, that positive peonies were blooming in his cheeks; and as if this was not miracle enough, he had brought his wife as a present Maurice's Antiquities of India, gloriously bound, and had even been so superfluous as to purchase a new pair of double-barrelled pistols for Julian: the lad was a fine young fellow after all, and ought to be encouraged in snuffing out a candle: as for Emily's *petit cadeau*, it was a fifty guinea set of cameos, the choicest in their way that Howell and James's had to show him. Moreover, he had sent a Bow street officer to Oxford, to make inquiries after Charles: actually, good fortune had made him at once humanized and happy.

So the chaise rattled up, and the General bounded out, and flew into the arms of his wondering wife, as Paris might have flown to Helen, or Leander to his heroine,—the only feminine Hero, whom grammar recognizes. It was past eleven at night: therefore he did not think to ask for Julian; no doubt the boy was gone to bed.

Indeed he had: and was tossing his wealed body, full of pains, and aches, and bruises, as softly as he could upon the feather-bed: he had need of poultices all over, and a quart of Friar's Balsam would have done him little good: after his well merited thrashing the flogged hound had slunk to his kennel, and locked him-

self sullenly in, without even speaking to his mother. Tobacco-fumes exuded from the keyhole, and I doubt not other creature comforts lent the muddled man their aid.

However, after the first rush of news to Mrs. Tracy, her lord who had every moment been expecting the door to fly open and Emily to fall into his arms,—for strangely did they love each other,—suddenly asked,

"But, where's Emmy all this time? she knows I'm here?—not got to bed is she?—knew I was coming?—"

"Oh! General, I'll tell you all about it to-morrow morning."

"About what, madam? Great God! has any harm befallen the child? Speak,—speak, woman!"

"Dear,—dear—Oh! what shall I say?" sobbed the silly mother, "Emily—Emily, poor dear Julian—"

"What the devil, ma'am, of Julian?" the General turned white as a sheet, and rang the bell, in singular calmness; probably for a dram of brandy. Saunders anwered it so instantly, that I rather suspect he was waiting just outside.

The moment Mrs. Tracy saw the grey-headed butler, anticipating all that he might say, she brushed past him, and hurriedly ran upstairs.

"What's all this, Mr. Saunders? where's Miss Warren?" And the poor old guardian seemed ready to faint at his reply: but he heard it out patiently.

"I am very sorry to say, General, that Miss Emily has been forced to take refuge at Sir Abraham Tamworth's: but she's well, sir, and safe, sir; quite well and safe," the good man hastened to say, "only I'm afraid that Mr. Julian had been taking liberties with—"

I dare not write the General's imprecation: then, as he clenched the arms of his easy-chair, as with the grasp of the dying, he asked, in a quick wild way,—

"But what was it?—what happened?"

"Nothing to fear, sir,—nothing at all, General;—I am thankful to say, that all I saw, and all we all saw, was Miss Emily pulling at the bell-rope with blood upon her face, and Mr. Julian on the floor: but I took the young lady to Sir Abraham's immediately, General, at her own desire."

The father arose sternly; his first feeling was to kill Julian; but the second, a far better one, predominated,—he must go and see Emily at once.

So, faintly leaning on the butler's arm, the poor old man (whom a moiety of ten minutes, with its crowding fears, had made to look some ten years older), proceeded to the square, and knocked up Sir Abraham at midnight: the Admiral came down, half asleep, in dressing-gown and slippers, vexed at having been knocked up from his warm berth so uncomfortably: it put him sorely in remembrance of his hardships as a middy.

"Kind neighbor, thank you, thank you; where's Emmy, take me to my Emmy," and the iron-hearted veteran wept like a driveller.

Sir Abraham looked at him queerly; and then, in a cheerful friendly way, replied,—

"Dear General, do not be so moved: the girl's quite safe with us; you'll see her to-morrow morning. All's right; she was only frightened, and George has given the fellow a proper good licking; and the girl's a-bed, you know; and, ey? what?"—

For the poor old man, like one bereaved, said, supplicatingly,—

"In mercy take me to her,—precious child!"

"My dear sir,—pray consider,—it's impossible: fine girl, you know;—Lady Tamworth, too,—can't be, can't be, you know, General."

And the mystified Sir Abraham looked to Saunders for an explanation,—

"Was his master drunk?"

"I must speak to her, neighbor, I must, must, and will,—dear, dear child: come up with me, sir, come; do not trifle with a breaking heart, neighbor!"

There was a heart still in that hard-baked old East Indian.

It was impossible to resist such an appeal: so the two elders crept up stairs, and knocked softly at her chamber-door. Clearly, the girl was asleep: she had sobbed herself to sleep; the General had been looked for all day long, and she was worn with watching; he could hardly come at midnight; so the dear affectionate child had sobbed herself to sleep.

"Allow me, Sir Abraham." And General Tracy whispered something at the keyhole in a strange tongue.

Not Aladdin's "open sesame" could have been more magical. In a moment, roused up suddenly from sleep, and forgetting everything but those tender recollections of gentle care in infancy, and kindness all through life, the child of nature started out of bed, drew the bolt, and in beauteous disarray, fell into that old man's arms!

It was enough; he had seen her eye to eye,—she lived: and the white-haired veteran suffered himself to be led away directly from the landing, like a little child, by his sympathizing neighbor.

"My heart is lighter now, Sir Abraham: but I am a poor weak old man, and owe you an explanation for this outburst; some day,—some day, not now. O, if you could guess how I have nursed that pretty babe when alone in distant lands; how I have doated on her little winning ways, and been gladdened by the music of her prattle; how I have exulted to behold her loveliness gradually expanding, as she was ever at my side, in peril as in peace, in camp as in quarters, in sickness as in health, still, still, the blessed angel of a bad man's life,—a wicked, hard old man, kind neighbor,—if you knew more, more, than for her sake I dare tell you,—and if you could conceive the love my Emmy bears for me, you would not think it strange, think it strange—" He could not say a syllable more: and the Admiral, with Mr. Saunders, too, who joined them in the study, looked very little able to console that poor old man. For they all had hearts, and trickling eyes to tell of them.

Then having arranged a shake-down for his master in Sir Abraham's study,—for the Guardian would not leave his dear one ever again, Saunders went home, purposing to attend with razors in the morning.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Intercalary.

THE Tamworths did not altogether live at Burleigh Singleton,—it was far too petty a place for them; dulness all the year round (however pleasant for a month or so, as holiday from toilsome pleasures) would never have done for Lady Tamworth and her daughters: but they regularly took Prospect House for six weeks in the summer season, when tired of Portland Place, and Huntover, their fine estate in Cheshire: and so, from constant annual immigration, came as much to be regarded Burleighites, as swifts and swallows to be ranked as British birds. I only hint at this piece of information, for fear any should think it unlikely, that grandees of Sir Abraham's condition could exist for ever in a place, where the day-before-yesterday's "Times" is first intelligence.

Moreover, as another interjectional touch, it is only due to my life-likenesses to record, that Mrs. Green's, although a Terrace-house, and ranked as humble No. 7, was, nevertheless, a tolerably spacious mansion, well suitable for the dignity of a butler to repose in: for Mrs. Green had added an entire dwelling on the inland side, as, like most maritime inhabitants, she was thoroughly sick of the sea, and never cared to look at it, though living there still, from mere disinclination to stir: so then, it was quite a double house, both spacious and convenient. As for the inglorious incident of Julian's latch-key, I should not wonder if many wide street-doors to many marble halls are conscious of similar convenient fastenings, if gentlemen of Julian's nocturnal tastes happen to be therein dwelling. Another little matter is worth one word. The house had been Mrs. Green's, a freehold, and was, therefore, now her heir's: but the General, as executor, remained there still, until his business was finished; in fact, he took his year's liberty.

He had returned from India, rolling in gold; for some great princess or other,—I think they called her a Begum, or a Glumdrum, or other such like Gulliverian appellative,—had been singularly fond of him, and had loaded him in early life with favors,—not only kisses, and so forth, but jewellery and gold pagodas. And lately, as we know, Puttymuddyfudgepoor, with its radiating Rajahs and Nabobs, had proved a mine of wealth: for a crore is ten lacs, and a lac of rupees is anything rather than a lack of money, although rupees be money, and the "middle is distributed;" in spite of logic, then, a lac means about twelve thousand pounds: and four of them, according to Cocker, some fifty thousand. It would appear then, that with the produce of the Begum's diamonds, converted into money long ago, and some of them as big as linnet's eggs,—and not to take account of Mrs. Green's trifling pinch of the five Exchequer bills, all handed over at once to Emily,—the General's present fortune was exactly one hundred and twenty-three thousand pounds.

Of course, *he* wasn't going to bury himself at Burleigh Singleton much longer; and yet, for all that stout intention of houses and lands, and carriages and horses, in almost any other county or country, it is as true as anything in this book, that he was a resident still, a lease-holder of Aunt Green's house, long after the *dénouement* of this story; in many things an altered man, but still identical in one; the unchangeable resolve (though never to be executed) of leaving Burleigh at farthest by next Michaelmas. Most folks who talk much, do little; and taciturn as the General now is, and has been ever throughout life, it will surprise nobody, who has learned from hard experience how silly and harmful a thing is secresy (exceptionables excepted), to find that he grew to be a garrulous old man, gossiping for ever of past, present, future, and, not least, about his deeds at Puttymuddyfudgepoor.

General Tracy is by this time awake again; if ever indeed he slept on that uncomfortable shakedown; and, after Mr. Saunders and the razor-strop, has greeted brightly beaming Emily with more than usual tenderness. Her account of the transaction made his very blood boil; especially as her pretty pouting lips were lacerated cruelly inside: that rude blow on the mouth had almost driven the teeth through them. How confidingly she told

her artless tale; how gently did her fond protector kiss that poor pale cheek; and how sternly did he vow full vengeance on the caitiff! Not even Emily's intercession could avail to turn his wrath aside. He could hardly help flying off at once to do something dreadful; but common courtesy to all the Tamworth family obliged him to defer for an hour all the terrible things he meant to do. So he began to bolt his breakfast fiercely as a cannibal, and saluted Lady Tamworth and her daughters with such savage looks, that the Captain considerately suggested:

"Here, General," handing him a most formidable carving-knife, "charge that boar's head, grinning defiance at us on the sideboard; it will do you good to hew his brawny neck. My mother, I am sure, for one, will thank you to do the honors there instead of me. Isn't it a comfort, now, to know that I broke the handle of my hunting whip across the fellow's back, and wore all the whip-cord into skeins. Come, I say, General, don't eat us all round; and pray have mercy on that poor flogged miserable sinner."

This banter did him good, especially as he saw Emily smiling; so he relaxed his knit brow, condescended to look less like giant Blunderbore, soon became marvellously chatty, and ate up two French rolls, an egg, some anchovies, a round of toast, and a mighty slice of brawn; these, washed down with a couple of cups of tea, soothed him into something like complacency.

CHAPTER XIX.

Julian's Departure

LONG before the General got home, still in exalted dudgeon (indeed soon after the General had left home over night), the bird had flown; for the better part of valor suggested to our evil hero, that it would be discreet to render himself a scarce commodity for a season; and as soon as ever his mother had run up to his room door to tell him of his danger, when her lord was cross-questioning the butler, he resolved upon instant flight. Accordingly, though sore and stiff, he hurried up, dressed again, watched his father out, and tumbling over Mrs. Tracy, who was sobbing on the stairs, ran for one moment to the General's room; there he seized a well remembered cash-box, and instinctively possessed himself of those new neat double-barrelled pistols: a bully never goes unarmed. These brief arrangements made, off he set, before his father could have time to return from Pacton Square.

Therefore, when the General called, we need not marvel that he found him not; no one but the foolish mother (so neglected of her son, yet still excusing him) stood by to meet his wrath. He would not waste it on her; so long as Julian was gone, his errand seemed accomplished; for all he came to do was to expel him from the house. So, as far as regarded Mrs. Tracy, her husband, wotting well how much she was to blame, merely commanded her to change her sleeping-room, and occupy Mr. Julian's in future.

The silly woman was even glad to do it; and comforted herself from time to time with prying into her own boy's exemplary manuscripts, memoranda of moralities, and so forth; with weeping, like Lady Constance, over his empty "unpuffed" clothes; with reading ever and anon his choice collection of standard works among which Don Juan and Mr. Thomas Paine were by

far the most presentable; and with tasting, till it grew to be a habit, his private store of spirituous liquors. Thus did she mourn many days for long lost Julian.

I am quite aware what became of him. The wretched youth, mad for Emily's love, and tortured by the tyranny of passion, had nothing else to live for or to die for. He accordingly took refuge in the hovel of a smuggler, an old friend of his, not many miles away, disguised himself in fisherman's costume, and bode his opportunity.

Beauteous girl! how often have I watched thee with straining eyes and aching heart, as thou wentest on thy summer's walk so oftentimes to Oxton, there to exercise thy bountiful benevolence in comforting the sick, gladdening the wretched, and lingering, with love's own look, in Charles's village school; how often have I prayed, that guardian angels might be about thy path as about thy bed! For the prowling tiger was on thy track, poor innocent one, and many, many times nothing but one of God's seeming accidents hath saved thee. Who was that strange man so often in the way? At one time a wounded Spanish Legionist, with head bound up; at another, an old beggar upon crutches; at another, a floury miller with a donkey and a sack; at another, a black looking man, in slouching sailor's hat and fishing-boots?

Fair, pure creature! thou hast often dropped a shilling in that beggar's hand, and pitied that poor maimed soldier; once, too, a huge gipsy woman would have had thee step aside, and hear thy fortunes. Heaven guarded thee then, sweet Emily; for, both girl and lover though thou art, thou would'st not listen to the serpent's voice, however fair might be the promises. And Heaven guarded thee ever, bidding some one pass along the path just as the ruffian might have gagged thy smiling mouth, and hurried thee away amongst his fellows; and more than once, especially, those school children, bursting out of Charles's school at dusk, have unconsciously escorted thee in safety from the perils of that Tiger on thy track.

CHAPTER XX.

Enlightenment.

THE General could not now be kept in ignorance of Charles's expedition; in fact, he had found his heart, and began resolutely to use it. So, the very day on which he had lost Julian, he intended very eagerly to seek out Charles; for the Oxford search had failed, and no wonder. Now, though Emily had told, as we well know, to both mother and son her secret, the father was not likely to be any the wiser; for he now never spoke to his wife, and could not well speak to his son. However, one day, an hour after an overland letter, a very exhilarating one, dated Madras, whereof we shall hear anon, fair Emily, in the fulness of her heart, could not help saying,

"Dearest sir, you are often thinking of poor lost Charles, I know; and you are very anxious about him too, though nobody but myself, who am always with you, can perceive it: what if you heard he was safe and well?"

"Have you heard any tidings of my poor boy, Emmy?"

She looked up archly and said, "Why not?" her beautiful eyes adding, as plainly as eyes could speak, "I love him, and you know it; of course I have heard frequently from dear, dear Charles."

But the guardian met her looks with a keen and chilling answer: "Why not! why not; does he dare to write to you, and you to love him? Oh that I had told them both a year ago! But where is he now, child? don't cry, I will not speak so angrily again, my Emmy."

"I hardly dare to tell you, dearest sir: you have always been as a father to me, and I never knew any other; but there are things I cannot explain to myself, and I was very wretched; and so, kind guardian, Charles—Charles was so good—"

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CHAPTER XXI.

Charles at Madras.

LUCKILY enough for all mankind in general, and our lovers in particular, Charles's last letter was very unlike some that had preceded it; for instead of the usual "Oh, my love"s, "sweet, sweet eyes," "darling"s, and all manner of such chicken-hearted nonsense, it was positively sensible, rational, not to say utilitari an; though, I must acknowledge, that here and there it degenerates into the affectionate, or Stromboli-vein of letter-writing, at opening especially; and really now and then I shall take leave to indicate omitted inflammations by a *.

"DEAREST DEAREST EMMY,

* * * * * *

[and so forth, a very galaxy of stars to the bottom of this page, enough to put the compositor out of his terrestrial senses.]

"You see I have recovered my spirits, dearest, and am not now afraid to tell you how I love you. Oh that detestable Captain Forbes! let him not cross my path, gossiping blockhead! on pain of carrying about 'til deth,' in the middle of his face, a nose two inches longer. I heartily wish I had never listened for an instant to such vile insinuations; and when I look at this red right hand of mine, that dared to pen the trash in that black postscript, I look at it as Cranmer did, and (but that it is yours, Emmy, not mine), could wish it burnt. But no fears now, my girl, huzza, huzza! I believe every one about me thinks me daft; and so I am for very joyfulness; notwithstanding, let me be didactic, or you will say so too. I really will endeavor to rein in, and go along in the regular hackney trot, that you may partly comprehend me. Well, then, here goes; try your paces, Dobbin.

"On the morning of Sunday, April 11th, 1842, the good ship Elphinston—(that's the way to begin, I suppose, as per ledger, log-book, and midshipman's epistles to mamma),—in fact, dear, we cast anchor just outside a furious wall of surf, which makes Madras a very formidable place for landing; and every one who dares to do so certain of a watering. There lay the city, most invitingly to storm-tost tars, with its white palaces, green groves, and yellow belt of sand, blue hills in the distance, and all else *couleur de rose*. But, but, Emmy, there was no getting at this paradise, except by struggling through a couple of miles of raging foam, that would have made mincemeat of the Spanish Armada, and have smashed Sir William Elphinston to pieces. How, then, did we manage to survive it? for, thank God always, here I am to tell the tale. Listen, Emmy dear, and I will try not to be tedious.

"We were bundled out of the rolling ship into some huge flat-bottomed boats, like coal-barges, and even so, were grated and ground several times by the churning waves on the ragged reefs beneath us: and, just as I was enjoying the see-saw, and trying to comfort two poor drenched womenkind who were terribly afraid of sharks, a huge cream-colored breaker came bustling alongside of us, and roaring out "Charles Tracy," gobbled me up bodily. Well, dearest, it wasn't the first time I had floundered in the waters [noble Charles! noble Charles! he had long forgiven Julian]; so I was battling on as well as I could with a stout heart and a steady arm, when—don't be afraid,—a *Catamaran* caught me! If you haven't fainted (bless those pretty eyes of your's, my Emmy!) read on; and you will find that this alarming sort of animal is neither an albatross nor an alligator, but simply—a life-boat with a Triton in the stern. Yes, God's messenger of life to me and happiness to you, my girl, came in the shape of a kindly, chattering, blue-skinned, human creature, who dragged me out of the surf, landed me safely, and, I need not say, got paid with more than hearty thanks. So, I scuffled to the customhouse to look after my traps and fellow-passengers, like a dripping merman.

"'Who is that miserable old woman bothering everybody?' asked I of a very civil searcher, profuse in his salaams.

"'Oh, Sahib, you will know for yourself presently: she 's always hanging about here, to get news of somebody in England, I believe,—and to try to find a charitable Captain who will take her all the way for nothing: rather too much of a good thing, you know, Sahib.'

[We really cannot undertake to scribble broken English: so we will translate anything that may mysteriously have been chattered by havildars, and coolies, and all manner of strange names.]

"'Poor old soul,—she looks very wretched: what 's her name?' asked I, carelessly.

"'Oh, I never troubled to inquire, Sahib: I believe she was an old servant left behind as lumber, and she pesters every one, day by day, about some "bonnie bonnie bairn."'

"In a moment, Emmy, I had seized on dear nurse Mackie!

"Very old, very deaf, very infirm,—she fancied I was driving her away, as many others might have done; and, with a truly piteous face, pleaded—

"'Gude sir, have mercy on a puir auld soul,—and let her ask for her sweet young mistress, only once, sir, only once more.'

"'Emily Warren?' said I.

"Her wrinkled face brightened over as with glory,—and she answered—

"'Bless the mouth that spake it, and these ears that hear her name! yes, yes, yes,—they call her so;—where is she? how is she? have you seen her? is she yet alive?'

"Leading away the affectionate old soul from the crowd that was collecting round us, I left orders about luggage as a traveller should, and then told her all I knew:—and I know you pretty well, I think, my Emmy.

"Her joy was like a madwoman's: the dear old Hecate pranced, and danced, and sung, and shouted like nothing but a mother when she finds her long lost child: not that she 's your mother, Emmy dear. No, no,—matters are better than that: all she vouchsafes, though, to tell me is, that you are a lady born and bred, and—for I cannot find the words to inform your pure mind clearer,—that "you are not what he thinks you."

[Here followeth another twinkling universe of stars;

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* * * * *

and thereafter our cavalier condescendeth again to matters of fact.]

"Nurse Mackie of course comes back with me next packet; this letter goes by the Overland Mail more quickly than we can; gladly would I go too, but the old woman, whose life is essential to your rights, would die of fatigue by the way: as it is, I am obliged to coddle her, and feed her, and ptisan her, like a sick baby, bless her dear old heart that loves my darling Emmy! She has a pack of papers with her, which she will not open, till the General is by her side: if she unfortunately dies before we can return, I am to have them and all will be right. But the old soul is so afraid of being left behind (as you throw away the orange-peel after you have squeezed it), that she will not tell me a word about them yet: so, I only gather what I can from her cautious garrulity, hints about a Begum and a Captain, and the Stuarts, and Putty-whatdy'e-call it. And it is all in document, as well as *viva-voce* (this means 'gossip,' dear). So now you may be expecting us, as soon as ever we can get to you. Tell the General all this, and give him my best love, next after your's, Emmy; for he is my father still, and my very heart yearns after him: O that he were kinder with me as I see he is with you, dear, and more open with us all! Also, kiss, if she will let you, my mother for me, and I hope you will have hinted to her long ago, that I am only playing truant. How is poor, poor Julian? he will understand me, if you tell him, I forgive him, and will never say one word about our little tiff.—And now, dearest Emmy,"

[The remainder of this letter must, believe me, be as starry as before.]

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CHAPTER XXII.

Revelations.

General Tracy gave a long-drawn sigh: and tears, tears of true affection, stood in those most fish-like eyes, as he mournfully said, "Bless him, bless dear Charles, almost as much as you, my own sweet Emmy. Heaven send it be true,—for Heaven can work miracles. But without a miracle, Emily, in sober sadness I declare it, you must forget—*your brother Charles, my daughter!*"

Emily fell flat upon her face, so cold, so white, that he believed her dead.

Oh! that he had never, never said that word: or better still, poor father, that you had never kept the dreadful secret from them. The adultery, indeed, was sin; but years of ill-concealings have multiplied its punishment. Wretched father,—wretched children! that must bear an erring father's curse.

Oh! that Jeanie Mackie may have reasons, proofs; and be not an impostor after all, dressing up a tale that over-sanguine Charles may bring her back again to Scotland. Well, well! I am full of sadness and perplexities: but we shall hear it out anon. Heaven help them!

Emily was taken very ill, and had a long fit of sickness. Day and night, night and day, did her poor wasting anxious father watch by her bed-side, gentle as the gentlest nurse, tender as the tenderest of mothers. And, indeed, the Lord of Life and Wisdom was gracious to them both; raising up the poor weak child again; and teaching that old man, through this daughter of his shame and sin in youth, that Religion is a cure for all things. Ay, "the blessed angel of a bad man's life," indeed, indeed was she; and he humbly knelt, as little children kneel, that hard and dried old man; and his eyes caught the ray of Heaven's mercy, looking up in joy to read forgiveness; and his heart was bathed in penitence,—the Rock flowed out amain; and his mind was quick-

ened into faith,—he lived, he breathed "a new born babe," that poor and bad old man given to the prayers of his own daughter!

All this while, Mrs. Tracy, thrown upon her own resources, has been continually tasting dear Julian's store, and finding out excuses for his trivial peccadilloes. And when, from the recesses of his desk, she had routed out (in company with sundry more, rather contrasting with a mother's pure advice) a few of her own letters which had not yet been destroyed, she would doat by the hour on these proofs of his affection. And then, her spirits were so low; and his choice smuggled Hollands so requisite to screw them up to par again; and no sooner had they rallied than they would once more begin to droop; so she cried a good deal; and kept her bed; and very often did not remember exactly, whether she was lying down there or figuring on the Esplanade with Julian, and,—all that sort of thing: accordingly, it is not to be wondered at, if in Aunt Green's double-house, the General and Emily saw very little of her, and during all this illness, had almost forgotten her existence. Nevertheless, she was alive still and as vast as ever,—though a course of strong waters had shattered her nerves considerably; even more so, than her real mother's grief at Julian's protracted absence.

Never had he been heard of since he left, hard heart; though he might have guessed a mother's sorrow, and was not far away, and often lingered near the house in strange disguises. It would have been easy for him, in some clever way or other, latch-key and all, to have gained access to her, and comforted her, and given her some real proof, that all the love she had shed on him had not been utterly thrown away; but he didn't,—he didn't; and I know not of a darker trait in Julian's whole career; he was insensible to love, a mother's love.

For love is the weapon which Omnipotence reserved to conquer rebel man, when all the rest had failed. Reason he parries; Fear he answers blow to blow; future Interest he meets with present pleasure: but Love, that sun against whose melting beams the Winter cannot stand, that soft-subduing slumber which wrestles down the Giant, there is not one human creature in a million, not a thousand men in all earth's huge quintillion, whose clay-heart is hardened against Love.

Yet was Julian one of those select ones; an awful instance of that possible, that actual, though happily that scarcest of all characters, a man,

> "Black, with *no* virtue, and a thousand crimes."

The amiable villain,—one whose generosity redeems his guilt, whose kindliness outweighs his folly, or whose beauty charms the eye to overlook his baseness,—this too common hero is an object and example fraught with perilous interest. Charles Duval, the polite; Paul Clifford, the handsome; Richard Turpin, brave and true; Jack Sheppard, no ignoble mind and loving still his mother; these, and such as these, with Schiller's Robbers and the like, are dangerous to gaze on, as Germany, if not England too, remembers well. But, not more true to life, though far less common to be met with, is a Julian's incorrigible mind: one, in whose life are no white days; one, on whose heart are no bright spots; when Heaven's pity spoke to him, he ridiculed; as, when His threatening thundered, he defied. Of this world only, and tending to a worse, appetite was all he lived for: and the core of appetite is iron selfishness.

The filched cashbox proved to be too well filled, for him to trouble himself with thinking of his mother yet awhile: and his smuggling acquaintances, a rough-featured blasphemous crew, set him as their chief, so long as he swore loudest, drank deepest, and had money at command. He hid the money, that they should not secretly steal from him that to which he owed his bad supremacy; and his double-barrels, shotted to the muzzle, were far too formidable for any hope of getting at it by open brute force. Nevertheless, they were "fine high spirited" fellows those, bold, dark men, of Julian's own kidney; who toasted in their cups each other's crimes, and the ghost or two that ought to have been haunting them.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Convalescence.

VERY slowly did Emily recover, for the blow had been more than she could bear: nothing but religion gave her any chance at all; and the phials, blisterings, bleedings, would have been in vain, in vain,—she must have died long ago,—had it not been for the remembrance of God's love, resignation to His will, and trust in the wisdom of his Providence. But these specific remedies gradually brought her round, while the kind-eyed doctors praised their own prescriptions: and after many rallyings and relapses, delirious ramblings, and intervals of hallowed Christian peace, the eye of Love's meek martyr brightened up once more, and health flushed again upon her cheek.

She recovered, God be praised! for her death would have been poor Charles's too; and the same grave that yawned for her and him would have closed upon their father also. Even as it was, when she arose from off the weary bed of sickness, it was to be a nurse herself, and watch beside that patient, weak old man. He could not bear her out of his sight all the fever through; but eagerly would listen to her hymns and prayers, joining in them faintly, like a dying saint. With the saddening secret, which had so long pressed upon his mind, he seemed to have thrown off his old nature, as a cast skin: and now he was all frankness for reserve, all piety for profaneness, all peacefulness for blusterings and wrath.

He remembered then poor Julian and his mother: taking blame to himself, justly, deeply, for neglected duties, chilling lack of sympathy, and that dull domestic sin, that still continued evil of unnatural omissions,—stern reserve. And he would gladly have seen Julian by his bedside, to have freely forgiven the lad, and welcomed him home again, and begun once more in openness and

charity, all things fair and new : but Julian was not to be found, though rewards were offered, and placards posted up, and emissaries from the Detective Police-force sought him far and wide. Alas! the bold bad man had heard with scorn of his father's penitence, and knew that he would gladly have received him ;—but what cared he for kindnesses or pardons? He only lived to waylay Emily.

As for Mrs. Tracy, she was seldom in a state to appear; but one day she managed to refrain a little, and came to see her husband almost sober. I was, authorially speaking, behind the door, and saw and heard as follows :

The old man, worn and emaciate, was weakly sitting up in bed, and Emma by his side, with the Bible in her lap: she casually shut it as the mother entered.

"Well, Miss Warren, there's a time for all things; but this is neither morning, noon, nor night; nor Sunday either, nor holyday, that I know of; it's eleven o'clock on Tuesday, Miss,—and I think you might as well leave the General at peace, without troubling him for ever with your prayer-books and your Bibles."

"Jane, my dear, I requested it of Emily; come and sit by me, and take my hand, wife."

"Thank you, sir, you are very obliging: not while that young woman is in the room.—You ought to be ashamed of yourself, General Tracy."

Poor Emmy ran away to weep. It seems that, in her delirium, she had spoken many things, and the servants blabbed them out to Mrs. Tracy.

"Ah, my poor wife, indeed I am: both ashamed and sorry—heartily sorry. But God forgives me, Jenny, and I hope that you will too."

"Upon my word, General, you carry it off with a high hand: and, not content, sir, with insulting me in my own home by bringing here your other women's children, you have expelled poor dear, dear Julian."

"Jane, if you will remember, he ran away himself; and you know that now I gladly would receive him: we are all prodigal sons together, and if God can bear with us, Jane, we ought to look kindly on each other."

"Ha! that's alway's the way with old sinners like you,—canting hypocrites! Be a man, General Tracy, if you can, and talk sense. I never did any harm or sin in all my life yet, and don't intend to: and my poor boy Julian's well enough, if they'd only let him alone; but nobody understands his heart but me. Good boy, I'm sure there's virtue enough left in him, if he loves his mother."—*If* he loves his mother.

"Jane, dear, I sent for you to kiss you; for I could not die in peace, nor live in peace (whichever God may please), without your pardon, Jane, for a thousand unkindnesses,—but, especially for the sin that gave me Emily. Forgive me this, my wife."

"Never, sir!" rejoined that miserable mind; and fancied that she was acting virtuously. She thrust aside the kindly proffered hand; scowled at him with darkened brow; drew up her commanding height; and, calling Mrs. Siddons to remembrance, brushed away in the indignant attitude of a tragedy queen.

Emmy ran again to her father, and the vain bad mother to her bottle; we must leave them to their various avocations.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Charles Delayed.

FEW things could well be more unlikely than that Emily should hear of Charles again before she saw him: for, having left Madras as speedily as might be, now that his mission was so easily, yet so naturally, accomplished,—having posted, as we know, his overland letter,—and having got on board the fast-sailing ship Samarang, Captain Trueman, Charles, in the probable course of things, if he wrote at all, must have been his own postman. But the Fates—(our Christianity can afford to wink now and then at Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, for, at any rate, they are as reasonable creatures as Chance, Luck, and Accident), the Fates willed it otherwise; and, accordingly, it is in my power to lay before the reader another genuine lucubration of Charles Tracy.

A change had come over the spirit of their dream, those youthful lovers: and agonizing doubt must rack their hearts, threatening to rend them both asunder. It is evident to me that Charles's letter (which Emily showed to me with a melancholy face) was on principle less warm, less dottable with stars, and more conversant with things of this world; high, firm, honorable principle: intending very gently, very gradually, to wean her from him, if he could; for his faith in Jeanie Mackie had been shaken, and—but let us hear him tell us of it all himself.

"I.E.M. Samarang. St. Helena.

"You will wonder, my dear Emily, to hear again before you see me: but I am glad of this providential opportunity, as it may serve to prepare us both. Naturally enough you will ask, why Charles cannot accompany his letter? I will tell you, dear, in one word,—Mrs. Mackie is now lying very ill on shore; and, as

far as our poor ship is concerned, you shall hear about it all anon. Several of the passengers, who were in a hurry to get home, have left us, and gone in the packet-boat that takes you this letter: gladly, as you know, would I have accompanied them, for I long to see you, poor dear girl; but it was impossible to leave the old woman, upon whom alone, under God, our hopes of earthly happiness depend: if, alas! we still can dream about such hopes.

"Oh, Emily,—I heartily wish that, having finished my embassage by that instantaneous finding of the old Scotch nurse, I had never been so superfluous as to have left those letters of introduction, wherewith you kindly supplied me, in an innocent wish to help our cause. But I felt solitary, too, waiting at Madras for the next ship to England; and in my folly, forgetful of the single aim with which I had come, Jeanie Mackie, to wit, I thought I might as well use my present opportunities, and see what I could of the place and its inhabitants.

"With that view, I left my letters at Government House, at Mr. Clarkson's, Colonel Bunting's, Mrs. Castleton's, and elsewhere, according to direction; and immediately found answer in a crowd of invitations. I need not vex you nor myself, Emmy, writing as I do with a heavy, heavy heart, by describing gaieties in which I felt no pleasure, even when amongst them, for my Emmy was not there: splendor, prodigality, and red-hot rooms, only made endurable by perpetually fanning punkahs: pompous counsellors, authorities, and other men in office, and a glut of military uniforms: vulgar wealth, transparent match-making, and predominating dulness: along with some few of the charities and kindnesses of life (Mrs. Bunting, in particular, is an amiable, motherly, good-hearted woman),—all these you will readily fancy for yourself.

"My trouble is deeper than anything so slight as the common satiations of ennui: for I have heard in these circles in which your,—my—the General, I mean, chiefly mixed, so much of that ill-rumor that it cannot all be false: they knew it all, and were certain of it all, too well, Emily, dear. And I have been pestering nurse Mackie night and day; but the old woman is so afraid of being left behind anywhere, or thrown overboard, or dropped upon some desert rock, that she is quite cross, and won't say a

single word in answer, even when I tell her all these terrible tales. Her resolution is, not to reveal one syllable more, until she sets foot on England; and several people at Madras annoyed me exceedingly by saying, that this kind of thing is an old trick with people who wish to be sent home again. She has hidden away her papers somewhere; not that I was going to steal them: but it shows how little trust she puts in anything, or any one, except the keeping of her own secret. However, she does adhere obstinately, and hopefully for us, to her original hint, 'you are not what he thinks you;' although she will not condescend to any single proof, or explanation, against the mighty mass of evidence, which probabilities, and common rumor, and the General's own belief, have heaped together. When I call you Emmy, too—the old soul, in her broad Scotch way, always corrects me, and invokes a blessing upon 'A-amy:' so there is a mystery somewhere: at least, I fervently hope there is: and, if the old woman has been playing us false, let us resign ourselves to God, my girl; for our fate will be that matters are as people say they are,—and then my old black postscript ends too truly with a wo, wo, wo,—!

"But I must shake off all this lethargy of gloom, dearest, dearest girl,—How can I dare to call you so? Let me, therefore, rush for comfort into other thoughts; and tell you at once of the fearful dangers we have now mercifully escaped; for the Samarang lies like a log in this friendly port, dismasted, and next to a wreck.

"I proceed to show you about it; perhaps I shall be tedious,—but I do it as a little rest, my own soul's love, from anxious, earnest, heart-distracting prayers continually, continually, that the sorrow which I spoke of be not true. Sometimes, a light breaks in, and I rejoice in the most sanguine hope: at others, gloom,—

"But a truce to all this, I say. Here shall follow didactically the cause why the good ship Samarang is not by this time in the Docks.

"We were lying somewhere about the tropical belt, Capricorn you know (O those tender lessons in Geography, my Emmy!), quite becalmed; the sea like glass, and the sky like brass, and

the air in a most stagnant heat: our good ship motionless, dead in a dead blue sea; it was

'Idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean.'

"The sails were hanging loosely in the shrouds; every one set, from skyscraper to studsail, in hopes to catch a breath of wind. My fellow-passengers and the crew, almost melted, were lying about as weak as parboiled eels: it was high noon, all things silent and subdued by that intolerable blaze; for the vertical sun, over our multiplied awnings and umbrellas, burnt us up, fierce as a furnace.

"I was leaning over the gangway, looking wistfully at the cool, clear, deep sea, wherefrom the sailors were trying to persuade a shark to come on board us, when, all at once, in the south-east quarter, I noticed a little round black cloud, thrown up from the horizon like a cricket ball. As anything is attractive in such sameness as perpetual sea and sky, my discovery was soon made known, and among the first to our captain. Calling for his Dolland, and bidding his second lieutenant run quick to the cabin and look at the Barometer, he viewed the little cloud in evident anxiety, and shook his head, with a solemn air: more than one light-hearted woman thinking he was quizzing them.

"Up came Lieutenant Joyce, looking as if he had seen a ghost in the cabin.

"'The mercury, sir, is falling just as rapidly as it would rise if you plunged it into boiling water: an inch a minute or so!'

"Our Captain saw the danger instantly, and brave as Trueman is, I never saw a man look paler.

"To drive all the passengers below, and pen them in with closed hatches and storm-shutters (so hot, Emmy, that the black hole of Calcutta must have been an ice-house to it: how the foolish people abused our wise skipper, and more than one pompous old Indian threatened him with an action for false imprisonment!) this huddling away was the first effort; and, simultaneously with it, the crew were all over the rigging, furling sails hurriedly, hurriedly.

"Meanwhile (for I was last on deck), that little cloud seemed whirling within itself, and many others gathered round it, all

dancing about on the horizon, as if sheaves of mischief tossed about by devils: I don't wish to be poetical, Emmy, for my heart is very, very sad; but if ever the Powers of the air sow the Wind and reap the Whirlwind, they were gathering in their Harvest at that door. Underneath the skipping clouds, which came on quickly, leaping over each other, as when the wain is loaded by a score of hands, I noticed a sea approaching, such as Pharaoh must have seen, when the wall of waters fell upon him; and premonitory winds came whistling by, and two or three sails were flapping in them still, and I was hurried down stairs after all the rest of us.

"Then, on a sudden, it appeared not winds, nor waves, nor thunder, but as if the squadroned cavalry of heaven had charged across the seas, and crushed our battered ship beneath their horse-hoofs! We were flung down flat on our beam ends; and the two or three unfurled sails, bursting with the noise of a cannon, were scattered miles away to leeward as if they had been paper. As for the poor fellows in the rigging, the Spirit of the Storm had already made them his: twenty of our men were swept away by that tornado.

"Then there was hewing and cleaving on deck, the clatter of many axes and hatchets: for we were in imminent danger of being capsized, keel uppermost, and our only chance was to cut away the masts.

"The muscles of courage were tried then, my Emmy, and the strength which religion gives a man. I felt sensibly held up by the Everlasting Arms: I could listen to the still small Voice, in the midst of a crash which might have been the end of all things: though in darkness, God had given me light; though in uttermost peril, my peace was never calmer in our little village school.

"And the billows were knocking at the poor ship's-side like sledge hammers; and the lightnings fell around us scorchingly, with forked bolts, as arrows from the hand of a giant; the thunders overhead, close overhead, crashing from a concave cloud that hung about us heavily,—a dense, black, suffocating curtain,—roared and raved as nothing earthly can, but thunder in the tropics; the rain was as a cataract, literally rushing in a mass; the winds appeared not winds, nor whirlwinds, but legions of eman-

cipated demons shrieking horribly, and flapping their wide wings; a flock of night-birds flying from the dawn; and all else was darkness, confusion, rolling and rocking about, the screams of women, the shouts of men, curses and prayers, agony, despair, and—peace, deep peace.

"On a sudden, to our great astonishment, all was silent again, oppressively silent; and, but for the swell upon the seas, all still. The tornado had rushed by; that troop of Tartar horse, having sacked the village, are departed, now in full retreat: the blackness and the fury are beheld on our lee, hastening across the broad Atlantic to Cuba or Jamaica: and behold, a tranquil temperate sky, a kindly rolling sea, a favoring breeze, and—not a sail, but some slight juryrig, to catch it.

"Many days we drifted like a log upon the wave; provisions running short, and water—water under tropical suns—scantily dealt out in tea-cups. Then, poor old Mackie's health gave way; and I dreaded for her death: one living witness is worth a cart load of cold documents. So I nursed and watched her constantly: till the foolish folks on board began to say I was her son: ah! me, for your sake I wish it had been so.

"And at length, just as some among the sailors were hinting at a mutiny for spirits, and our last case of Gamble's meat was opened for the sick, our look-out on the jurymast gave the welcome note of 'Land!' and soon to us on deck, the heights of St. Helena rose above the sea. Towed in by friendly aid, here we are, then, precious Emily, refitting: and, as it must be a week yet before we can be ready, I have taken my old woman to a lodging upon land, and rejoice (what have I to do with joy?) to see her speedily recovering."

The remainder of Charles's long letter is so stupid, so gloomy, so loving, and so little to the purpose, that I take an Editor's privilege, and omit it altogether. Of course, he was coming home again, as soon as the Samarang and Jeanie Mackie would permit.

CHAPTER XXV.

Trials.

THE General recovered; as slowly, indeed, as Emily had, but it is gratifying to add, as surely. And now that loving couple might be seen, weakly creeping out together, when the day was finest: tottering white December leaning on a sickly fragile May. There were no concealments now between them, no reservings, and heart-stricken Emily heard from her repentant father's lips the story of her birth: she was, he said, his own daughter by a native princess, the Begum Dowlia Burruckjutli.

A bitter—bitter truth was that; the destruction of all her hopes, pleasures, and affections. It had now become to her a sin to love that dearest one of all things lovely on this earth: duty, paramount and stern, commanded her, without a shadow of reprieve, to execute on herself immediately the terrible sentence of banishing her own betrothed: nay more, she must forget him, erase his precious image from her heart, and never, never see that brother more. And Charles must feel the same, and do the like; oh! sorrow, passing words! and their two commingled souls must be violently wrenched apart; for such love in them were crime.

Dear children of affection,—it is a dreadful lesson this for both of you; but most wise, most needful,—or the hand that guideth all things, never would have sent it. Know ye not for comfort, that ye are of those, to whom all things work together for good? Know ye not for counsel, that the excess of love is an idolatry, that must be blighted? It is well, children, it is well, that ye should thus carry your wounded hearts for balm to the altar of God; it is well that ye should bow in meekness to His will, in readiness to His wisdom. Ye are learning the lesson speedily, as docile children should; and be assured of high reward from the Teacher who hath set it you. Poor Charles! white and

cipated demons shrieking horribly, and flapping their wide wings; a flock of night-birds flying from the dawn; and all else was darkness, confusion, rolling and rocking about, the screams of women, the shouts of men, curses and prayers, agony, despair, and—peace, deep peace.

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understand. perhaps, though you may not, my blessed girl,—say to him, that 'he is mistaken, and all are mistaken,—you are not what they think you.' A thousand kisses. Expect, then, on bright to-morrow to see your happy, happy

"CHARLES."

"P.S. Hip! hip! hip!—huzzah!"

Dearest Emily had taken up the note with fears and trembling: she laid it down, as they that reap in joy; and I never in my life saw anything so beautiful as her eyes at that glad minute; the smile through the tear, the light through the gloom, the verdure of high summer springing through the Alpine snows, the mild and lustrous moon emerging from a baffled thunder cloud.

And, although the General mournfully shook his head, distrustfully and despondingly; though he only uttered, "Poor children,—dear children,—would to Heaven that it could be so;"—and he, for one, was evidently inoculated, as before, with all the old thoughts of gloom, sadness, and anxiety;—still Emily hoped—for Charles hoped—and Jeanie Mackie was so certain.

wan, thy cheek is grown transparent with anxiety, and thy blue eye dim with hope deferred: poor Emmy, sick and weak, thou weariest heaven with thy prayers, and waterest thy couch with thy tears. Yet, a little while: this discipline is good: storm and wind, frost and rushing rains, are as needful to the forest tree as sun and gentle shower: the root is strengthening, and its fibres spreading out: and loving still each other with the best of human love, ye justly now have found out how to anchor all your strongest hopes, and deepest thoughts, on him who made you for himself. Who knoweth? wisely acquiescing in His will, humbly trusting to His mercy, and bringing the holocaust of your inflamed affections as an offering of duty to your God,—who knoweth? Can He not interpose? will He not befriend you? For His arm is Power, and His heart is Love.

Days rolled on in dull monotony, and grew to weeks more slowly than before; earthly hopes had been levelled with the dust; life had forgotten to be joyous: there was, indeed, the calm, the peace, the resignation, the heavenly antepast, and the soul-entrancing prayer; but human life to Emily was flat, wearisome, and void; she felt like a nun, immolated as to this world: even as Charles, too, had resolved to be an anchorite, a stern, hard, mortified man, who once had feelings and affections. The reaction in both those fond young hearts had even overstept the golden mean: and Mercy interposed to make all right, and to bless them in each other once again.

Only look at this billet-doux from Charles, just come in, and dated Plymouth.

"Huzzah,—for Emily and England: huzzah for the land of freedom! no secrets now,—dear, dear old Jeanie Mackie has given me proofs positive: all I have to wish is that she could move: but she is very ill; so, as we touched here on the voyage up channel, I landed her and myself, thinking to kiss within a day my darling Emmy. But I cannot get her out of bed this morning, and dare not leave her: though an hour's delay seems almost insupportable. If I possibly can manage it, I will bring the dear old faithful creature, wrapped in blankets, by chaise to-morrow. Tell my father all this: and say to him—he will

understand. perhaps, though you may not, my blessed girl,—say to him, that 'he is mistaken, and all are mistaken,—you are not what they think you.' A thousand kisses. Expect, then, on bright to-morrow to see your happy, happy

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CHAPTER XXVI.

Julian.

NEXT day, a fine summer afternoon, when our feeble convalescents had gone out together, they found the fresh air so invigorating, and themselves so much stronger, that they prolonged their walk half-way to Oxton. The pasture-meadows, rich and rank, were alive with flocks and herds; the blue sea lazily beat time, as, ticking out the seconds, it melodiously broke upon the sleeping shore; the darkly flowing Mullet swept sounding to the sea between its tortuous banks; and upon that old high footpath skirting the stream now shady with hazels, and now flowery with meadow-sweet, crept our chastened pair.

Just as they were nearing a short angle in the river, the spot where Charles had been preserved, they noticed for the first time a rough looking fisherman, who, unseen, had tracked their steps some hundred yards; he had a tarpaulin over his shoulder, very unnecessarily, as it would seem, on so fine and warm a day; and a slouching Sou'-Wester, worn askew, flapped across the strange man's face.

He came on quickly, though cautiously, looking right and left; and Emily trembled on her guardian's feeble arm. Yes,—she is right; the fisherman approaches,—she detects him through it all; and now he scorns disguise; flinging off his cap and the tarpaulin, stands before them—Julian!

"So, sir,—you tremble now, do you, gallant General; give me the girl." And he levelled at his father one of those double-barrelled pistols, full-cock.

"Julian, my son, I forgive you, Julian; take my hand, boy."

"What,—coward? now you can cringe, and fawn, eh? back with you!—the girl, I say." For poor Emily, wild with fear, was clinging to that weak old man.

Julian levelled again; indeed, indeed it was only as a threat;

but his hand shook with passion—the weapon was full-cock, hair-triggered,—shotted heavily as always,—hark, hark !—And his father fell upon the turf covered with blood!

When a wicked man tampers with unintended crime, even accident falls out against him. Many a one has richly merited death for many other sins, than that isolated, haply accidental one which he has hanged for.

Julian, horror-stricken, pale and trembling, flew instinctively to help his father: but Emily has circled him already with her arms; and listen, Julian,—your dying father speaks to you.

"Boy, I forgive—I forgive: but—Emily, no, no, cannot, cannot be,—Julian,—she,—she,—is your *sister!*" and the old man swooned away, from loss of blood, and the excitement of that awful scene.

Not a word in reply said that poor sinner, maddened with his life-long crimes, the fratricide in will, the parricide in deed, and all for—a sister. But growing whiter as he stood, a marble man with bristling hair, he slowly drew the other pistol from his pocket, put the muzzle to his mouth, and, firing as he fell, leapt into the darkly-flowing Mullet!

The current, all too violent to sink in, and uncommissioned now to save, hurried its black burden to the sea; and a crimson streak of gore marked the track of the Suicide.

The old man was not dead; but a brace of bullets taking effect upon his feeble frame, one through the shoulder, and another which had grazed his head, had been quite enough to make him seem so. Forgetful of all but that dear sufferer, and totally ignorant of Julian's fate,—for she neither saw nor heard anything, nor feared even for her own imminent peril, while her father lay dying on the grass,—Emily had torn off her scarf, and bound up, as well as she could, the ghastly scored head and broken shoulder. She succeeded in staunching the blood,—for no great vessel had been severed,—and so simple an application as grass dipped in water, proved to be a good specific. Then to her exceeding joy, those eyes opened again, and that dear tongue faintly whispered, —"bless you."

Oh that blessing! for it fell upon her heart: and fervently she knelt down there, and thanked the Great Preserver.

And now, for friendly help; there is no one near: and it is growing dusk; and she dare not leave him there alone one minute—for Julian, dreaded Julian, may return and kill him. What shall she do? How to get him home? Alas, alas, he may die where he is lying.

Hark, Emmy, hark,—the shouts of happy children bursting out of school! see, dearest, see,—here they come homewards merrily from Oxton!

Thus, rewarded through the instrumentality of her own benevolence, help was speedily obtained; and Mrs. Sainsbury's invalid chair, hurried to the spot by an escort of indignant rustics, soon conveyed the recovering patient to the comforts of his own home, and the appliances of medical assistance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Charles's return; and Mrs. Mackie's explanation.

And now the happy day was come at length; that day formerly so hoped-for, latterly so feared, but last of all, hailed with the joy that trembles at its own intensity. The very morning after the sad occurrence it has just been my lot to chronicle,—while the General was having his wounds dressed, slight ones happily, but still he was not safe, as inflammation might ensue,—while Mrs. Tracy was indulging in her third tumbler, mixed to whet her appetite for shrimps,—and while Emily was deciphering for the forty thousandth time, Charles's sanguine billet-doux,—lo, a dusty chaise and smoking posters, and a sunburnt young fellow springing out, and just upon the stairs,—they were locked in each other's arms!

Oh, the rapture of that instant! it can but happen once within a life. Ye that have loved, remember such a meeting; and ye that never loved, conceive it if you can; for my pen hath little skill to paint so bright a pleasure. It is to be all heart, all pulse, all sympathy, all spirit,—but the warm soft kiss, that rarified bloom of the Material.

How the sick old nurse got out, cased in many blankets; how she was bundled up stairs, and deposited safely on a sofa, no poet is alive to sing: to those who would record the payment of postilions, let me leave so sweet a theme.

The first fond greetings over, and those tumults of affection sobered down, Charles rejoiced to find how lovingly the General met him; the kind and good old man fell upon his neck, as the father in the parable. Many things were then to be made known; and many questions answered, as best might be, about a mother and a brother; but well aware of all things ourselves, let us be satisfied that Charles heard in due time, all they had to tell him;

though neither Emily nor the General could explain what had become of Julian after that terrible encounter. In their belief he had fled for very life, thinking he had killed his father. Poor wretched man, thought Charles,—on that same spot too, where he would have murdered me!—And for his mother,—why came she not down eagerly and happily, as mothers ever do, to greet her long-lost son? Do not ask, Charles; do not press the question. Think her ill, dying, dead,—anything but—drunken. He ran to her room-door; but it was locked—luckily.

Now, Charles, now speedily to business; happy business that, if I may trust the lover's flushing cheek, and Emily's radiant eyes; but a mournful one too, and a fearful, if I turn my glance to that poor old man, wounded in body and stricken in mind,—who waits to hear, in more despondency than hope, what he knows to be the bitter truth,—the truth that must be told, to the misery of those dear children.

Faint and weak though she appeared, Jeanie Mackie's waning life spirited up for the occasion; her dim eye kindled; her feeble frame was straight and strong; energy nerved her as she spoke; this hour is the errand of her being.

Long she spoke, and loudly, in her broad Scotch way; and the General objected many things, but was answered to them all; and there was close cross-questioning, slow caution, keen examination of documents and letters: catechisms, solecisms, Scotisms; reminiscences rubbed up, mistakes corrected; and the grand result of all, Emily a Stuart, and the General not her father! I am only enabled to give a brief account of that important colloquy.

It appears, that when Captain Tracy's company was quartered to the west of the Gwalior, sent thither to guard the Begum Dowlia against sundry of her disaffected subjects, a certain Lieutenant James Stuart was one among those welcome brave allies. That our gallant Tracy was the beautiful Begum's favorite soon became notorious to all; and not less so, that the Begum herself was precisely in the same interesting situation as Mrs. James Stuart. The two ladies, Pagan and Christian, were, technically speaking, running a race together. Well, just as times drew nigh. poor Lieutenant Stuart was unfortunately killed in an in-

surrection headed by some fanatics, who disapproved of foreign friends, and perhaps of their Princess's situation. His death proved fatal also to that kind and faithful wife of his,—a dark Italian lady of high family, whose love for James had led her to follow him even into Central Hindostan: she died in giving birth to a babe; and Jeanie Mackie, the Lieutenant's own foster-mother, who waited on his wife through all their travels, assisted the poor orphan into this bleak world, and loved it as her own.

Two days after all this, the Begum herself had need of Mrs. Mackie: for it was prudent to conceal some things, if she could, from certain Brahmins, who were to her what John Knox had erstwhile been to Mary: and Jeanie Mackie, burdened with her little Amy Stuart, aided in the birth of a female Tracy-Begum. So, the nurse tended both babes; and more than once had marvelled at their general resemblance; Amy's mother looked out again from those dark eyes; there was not a shade between the children.

Now, Mrs. Mackie perceived, in a very little while, how fond both Christian and Pagan appeared of their own child; and how little notice was taken by anybody of the poor Scotch gentleman's orphan. Accordingly, with a view to give her favorite all worldly advantages, she adroitly changed the children; and, while she was still kind and motherly to the little Tracy-Begum, she had the satisfaction to see her pet supposititiously brought up in all the splendors of an Eastern court.

Years wore away, for Captain Tracy was quite happy, the Begum being a fine showy woman, and the pretty child his playmate and pastime: so he never cared to stir from his rich quarters, till the Company's orders forced him: and then Puttymuddyfudgepoor hailed him accumulatively both Major and Colonel.

When he found that he must go, he insisted on carrying off the child; and the Begum was as resolute against it. Then Mrs. Mackie, eager to expedite little Stuart in her escape, went to the princess, told her how that, in anticipation of this day, she had changed the children, and got great rewards for thus restoring to the mother her own offspring.

The remainder of that old Scotch nurse's very prosy tale may

be left to be imagined: for all that was essential has been stated: and the documents in proof of all were these:—

First: the marriage certificates of James Stuart and Ami di Romagna, duly attested, both in the Protestant and Romanist forms.

Secondly: divers letters to Lieutenant Stuart from his friends at Glenmuir; others to Mrs. Stuart, from her father, the old Marquis di Romagna, at Naples: several trinkets, locks of hair, the wedding-ring, &c.

Thirdly: a grant, written in the Hindostanee character, from the Begum Dowlia, promising the pension of thirty rupees a month to Jeanie Mackie, for having so cleverly preserved to her the child: together with a regular judicial acknowledgment, both from several of Tracy's own sepoys, and from the Begum herself, that the girl, whom Captain Tracy was so fond of, was, to the best of their belief, Amy Stuart.

Fourthly: a miniature of Mrs. James Stuart, exactly portraying the features of her daughter,—this bright beautiful dark eyed face, our own beloved Emily Warren.

And to all that accumulated evidence, Jeanie Mackie bore her living testimony; clearly, unhesitatingly, and well assured, in the face of God and man.

Doubt was at an end; fear was at an end; hope was come, and joy. Happy were the lovers, happy Jeanie Mackie, but happiest of all appeared the General himself. For now she might be his daughter indeed, sweet Emmy Tracy still, dear Charles's loving wife. And he blessed them as they knelt, and gave them to each other; well-rewarded children of affection, who had prayed in their distress!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Julian turns up: and there's an end of Mrs. Tracy.

THERE is a muddy sort of sand-bank, acting as a delta to the Mullet, just where it spreads from deep to shallow, and falls into the sea. Strange wild fowl abound there, coming from the upper clouds in flocks: and at high water, very little else but rushes can be seen, to testify its submarine existence.

A knot of fishermen, idling on the beach, have noticed an uncommon flight of Royston crows gathered at the island, with the object, as would appear, of battening on a dead porpoise, or some such body, just discernible among the rushes. Stop,—that black heap may be kegs of whiskey;—where's the glass?

Every one looked: it warn't barrels,—and it warn't a porpoise: what was it, then? they had universally nothing on earth to do, so they pushed off in company to see.

I watched the party off, and they poked among the rushes, and heaved out what seemed to me a seal: so I ran down to the beach to look at the strange creature they had captured. Something wrapped in a sail; no doubt for exhibition at per head.

But they brought out that black burden solemnly, laying it on the beach at Burleigh: a crowd quickly collected round them, that I could not see the creature: and some ran for a magistrate, and some for a parson. Then men in office came,—made a way through the crowd, and I got near: so near, that my foolish curiosity lifted up the sail, and I beheld—what had been Julian.

O, sickening sight: for all which the pistol had spared of that swart and hairy face, had been preyed upon by birds and fishes!

There was a hurried inquest: the poor General and Emily deposed to what they knew, and the rustics, who escorted him from Oxton. The verdict could be only one,—self-murder.

So, by night, on that same swampy island, when the tide was

low, they buried him, deeply staked into the soil, lest the waves should disinter him, without a parting prayer. Such is the end of the wicked.

In a day or two, I noticed that a rude wooden cross had been set over the spot: and it gratified me much to hear that a rough-looking crew of smugglers had boldly come and fixed it there, to hallow, if they could, a comrade's grave.

However, these poor fellows had been cheated hours before: Charles' brotherly care had secured the poor remains, and the vicar winked a blind permission: so Charles buried them by night in the church-yard corner, under the yew, reading many prayers above them.

Two fierce-looking strange men went to that burial with reverent looks, as it were chief mourners; and when all the rites were done, I heard them gruffly say to Charles, "God bless you, sir, for this!"

When the mother heard those tidings of her son, she was sobered on the instant, and ran about the house with all a mother's grief, shrieking like a mad woman. But all her shrieks and tears could not bring back poor Julian; deep, deep in the silent grave, she cannot wake him,—cannot kiss him now. Ah well! ah well!

Then did she return to his dear room, desperate for him and—Hollands; once, twice, thrice, she poured out a full tumbler of the burning fluid, and drank it off like water; and it maddened her brain: her mind was in a frenzy of delirium, while her body shook as with a palsy.

Let us draw the curtain; for she died that night.

They buried her in aunt Green's grave: what a meeting theirs will be at the Day of Resurrection!

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Old Scotch Nurse goes home.

Six months at least,—this is clearly not a story of the Unities,—six months' interval must now elapse before the wedding day. Charles and Emmy,—for he called her Emmy still, though Jeanie Mackie would persist in mouthing it to "Aamy,"—wished to have it delayed a year, in respect for the memory of those, who, with all their crime and folly, were not the less a mother and a brother: but the General would not hear of such a thing; he was growing very old, he said; although actually he seemed to have taken out a new lease of life, so young again and buoyant was the new-found heart within him; and thus growing old, he was full of fatherly fear that he should not live to see his children's happiness. It was only reasonable and proper that our pair of cooing doves should acquiesce in his desire.

Meanwhile, I am truly sorry to say it, Jeanie Mackie died; for it would have been a good novel-like incident to have suffered the faithful old creature to have witnessed her favorite's wedding, and then to have been forthwith killed out of the way, by—perishing in the vestry. However, things were ordered otherwise, and Jeanie Mackie did not live to see the wedding: if you wish to know how and where she died, let me tell you at once.

Scotland,—Argyllshire,—Glenmuir; this was the focus of her hopes and thoughts,—that poor old Indian exile! She had left it, as a buxom bright-haired lassie; but oaks had now grown old that she had planted acorns; and grandmothers had died palsied, whom she remembered born; still, around the mountains and the lakes, those changeless features of her girlhood's rugged home, the old woman's memory wandered; they were pictured in her mind's eye hard, and clear, and definite as if she looked upon them now. And her soul's deep hope was to see them once again.

There was yet another object which made her yearn for Scotland. Lieutenant Stuart had been the younger of two brothers, the eldest born of whom became, upon his father's, the old laird's, death, Glenmuir and Glenmurdock. Now, though twice married, this elder brother, the new laird, never had a child; and the clear consequence was, that Amy Stuart was likely to become sole heiress of her ancestor's possessions. The Lieutenant's marriage with an Italian and a Romanist had been, doubtless, any thing but pleasant to his friends; the strict old Presbyterians, and the proud unsullied family of Stuart, could not palate it at all. Nevertheless, he did marry the girl, according to the rites of both churches, and there was an end of it; so innumerable proverbs coming to their aid about "curing and enduring" and "must be's," and the place where "marriages are made," &c., the several aunts and cousins were persuaded at length to wink at the iniquity, and to correspond both with Mrs. James and her backsliding lieutenant. Of the offspring of that marriage, and her orphaned state, and of Mrs. Mackie's care, and the indefinite detention in central Hindostan, they had heard oftentimes; for, as there is no corner of the world where a Scot may not be met with, so, with laudable nationality, they all hang together; and Glenmuir was written to frequently, all about the child, through Jeanie Mackie, "her mark," and a scholarly serjeant, Duncan Blair.

Amy's rights,—or Emmy let us call her still, as Charles did, —were now, therefore, the next object of Mrs. Mackie's zeal; and all parties interested willingly listened to the plan, of spending one or two of those weary weeks in rubbing up relationships in Scotland; the General also was not a little anxious about heritage and acres. Accordingly, off they set in the new travelling carriage, with due notice of approach, heartily welcomed, to Dunstowr Castle, the fine old feudal strong-hold of Robert Stuart, Laird of Glenmuir and Glenmurdock.

The journey, the arrival, and the hearty hospitality; and how the grey old chieftain kissed his pretty niece; and how welcome her betrothed Charles and her kind lifelong guardian, and her faithful nurse were made; and how the beacons blazed upon the hilltops, and the mustering clan gathered round about old Dun-

stowr; and how the laird presented to them all their beautiful future mistress; and how Jeanie Mackie and her documents travelled up to Edinburgh, where writers to the signet pestered her heart-sick with over-caution; and how the case was all cleared up, and the distant disappointed cousin, who had irrationally hoped to be the heir, was gladdened, if not satisfied, with a pension and a cantle of Glenmuir; and how all was joyfulness and feasting, when Amy Stuart was acknowledged in her rights, —the bagpipes and the wassail, salmon, and deer, and blackcock, with a river of mountain dew: let others tell who know Dunstowr; for as I never was there, of course I cannot faithfully describe it. Should such an historian as I condescend to sheer inventions?

With respect to Jeanie Mackie, I could learn no more than this: she was sprightly and lively, and strong as ever, though in her ninetieth year, till her foster-child was righted, and the lawyers had allowed her claim. But then there seemed nothing else to live for; so her life gradually faded from her eye, as an expiring candle; and she would doze by the hour, sitting on a settle in the sun, basking her old heart in the smile of those old mountains. None knew when she died, to a minute; for she died sitting in the sun, in the smile of those old mountains.

They buried her, with much of rustic pomp, in the hillchurch of Glenmuir, where all her fathers slept around her; and Emily and Charles, hand-in-hand, walked behind her coffin mournfully.

CHAPTER XXX.

Final.

GLADLY would the Laird have had the marriage at Dunstowr, and have given away the beauteous bride himself: but there must still be two months more of decent mourning, and the General had long learned to sigh for the maligned delights of Burleigh Singleton. So, Glenmuir could only get a promise of re-appearance some fine summer or other: and, after another day's deer-stalking, which made the General repudiate telescopes from that day forth (the poor man's eyes had actually grown lobster-like with straining after antlers)—the travelling carriage, and four lean kine from Inverary, whisked away the trio towards the South.

And now, in due time, were the Tamworths full of joy, congratulating, sympathizing, merrymaking: and the three young ladies behaved admirably in the capacity of pink and silver bridesmaids; while George proved equally kind in attending (as he called it) Charles's "execution," wherein he was "turned off;" and the Admiral, G.C.B., was so hand-in-glove with the General, H.E.I.C.S., that I have reason to believe they must have sworn eternal friendship, after the manner of the modern Germans.

How beautiful our Emmy looked—I hate the broad Scotch Aamy,—how bright her flashing eyes, and how fragrantly the orange-blossoms clustered in her rich brown hair;—let him speak lengthily, whose province it may be to spin three volumes out of one: for me, I always wish to recollect that readers possess, on the average, at least as much imagination as writers. And why should you not exercise it now? Is not Emmy in her bridal dress a theme well worth a reverie?

For a similar reason, I must clearly disappoint feminine expectation, by forbearing to descant upon Charles's slight but manly form, and his Grecian beauty, &c., all the better for the tropics, and the trials, and the troubles he had passed.

When Captain Forbes, just sitting down to his soup in the Jamaica Coffee-house, read in the Morning Post, the marriage of Charles Tracy with Amy Stuart, he delivered himself mentally as follows:—

"There now: poets talk of 'Love,' and I stick to 'human nature.' When that fine young fellow sailed with me, hardly a year ago, in the Sir William Elphinston, he was over head and heels in love with old Jack Tracy's pretty girl, Emily Warren: but I knew it wouldn't last long: I don't believe in constancy for longer than a week. It does one's heart good to see how right one is; here's what I call proof. My sentimental spark kisses Emily Warren, and marries Amy Stuart!" The Captain, happier than before, called complacently for Cayenne pepper, and relished his mock-turtle with a higher gusto.

It is worth recording, that the same change of name mystified slanderous friends in the Presidency of Madras.

And now, kind-eyed reader, this story of "The Twins" must leave off abruptly at the wedding. As in its companion-tale, "The Crock of Gold," one grand thesis for our thoughts was that holy wise command, "Thou shalt not covet," and as its other comrade "Heart" is founded on "Thou shalt not bear false witness," so in this, the seed-corn of the crop were five pure words, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Other morals doubtless grew up round us, for all virtue hangs together in a bunch: the harms of secresy, false witness, inordinate affections, and red murder: but in chief, as we have said.

Moreover, I wish distinctly to make known, for dear "domestic" sake, that so far from our lovers' happiness having been consummated (that is, finished) in the honeymoon,—it was only then begun. How long they are to live thus happily together, Heaven, who wills all things good, alone can tell: I wish them three score years. Little ones, I hear, arrive annually; to the unqualified joy, not merely of papa and mamma, but also of our communicative old General, his friend the G.C.B., and (all but most of any), the Laird of Glenmuir and Glenmurdock: whose heart has been entirely rejoiced by Charles Tracy having added to his name, and to his children's names, that of Stuart.

Mr. and Mrs. Tracy Stuart are often at Glenmuir; but oftener at Burleigh, where the General, I fancy, still resides. He protests that he never will keep a secret again: long may he live to say so!

THE END.

HEART:

A SOCIAL NOVEL.

BY MARTIN FARQUHAR TUPPER,

AUTHOR OF

"PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY."

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HEART.

CHAPTER I.

Wherein two anxious parents hold a colloquy.

"Is he rich, ma'am? is he rich?—ey? what, what?—is he rich?"

Sir Thomas was a rapid little man, and quite an epicure in the use of that luscious monosyllable.

"Is he rich, Lady Dillaway?—ey?—what?"

"Really, Thomas, you never give me time to answer," replied the quintessence of quietude her Ladyship; "and then it is perpetually the same question, and—"

"Well, ma'am, and can there be a more important question asked? I repeat it, is he rich?—ey?—what?"

"You know, Sir Thomas, we never are agreed about the meaning of that word; but I should say, very."

As Lady Dillaway always spoke quite softly in a whisper, she had failed to enlighten the knight; but he seemed, notwithstanding, to have caught her intention instinctively; for he added in his impetuous, imperious way——

"No nonsense now, about talents and virtues, and all such trash; but quick, ma'am, quick—is the man rich?"

"In talents, as you mention the word, certainly, very rich; a more clever or accomplished——"

"Cut it short, ma'am, cut it short, I say—I'll have no adventurers who live by their wits, making up to my daughter—pedantic puppies, good for ushers, nothing else; what do they mean by knowing so much?—ey?—what?"

"And then, Sir Thomas, if you will only let me speak, a man of purer morals, finer feelings, higher Christian——"

"Bah! well enough for curates,—go on, ma'am, go on, and make haste to the point of all points,—is he rich?"

"You know I never will make haste, Thomas, for I never can have patience, and you shall hear; I am little in the habit of judging people entirely by their purses, not even a son-in-law, provided there is a sufficiency on the one side or the other for——"

"Quick, Mum, quick,—rich? rich? will the woman drive me mad?" and Sir Thomas Dillaway, Knight, rattled loose cash in both pockets more vindictively than ever. But the spouse, nothing hurried, still crept on in her *sotto voce andantino* style,

"Mr. Clements owes nothing, has something, and above and beside all his good heart, good mind, good fame, good looks, and good family, possesses a contented——"

"Pish! contented, bah!"—our hasty knight's nose actually curled upwards in utter scorn, as he added, "Now, that's enough, quite enough, I bet a plum the man's poor. Contented indeed! did you ever know a rich man yet who was contented,—ey, Mum, ey? or a poor one that wasn't—ey, what? I've no patience with those contented fellows: it's my belief they steal away the happiness of monied men. If this Mr. Clements was rich, rich, one wouldn't mind so much about talents, virtues, and contentment,—workhouse blessings;—but the man's poor, I know it,—poo-o-o-r!"

Sir Thomas had a method quite his own of pronouncing those contradictory monosyllables, rich and poor: the former he gave out with an unctuous, fish-saucy gusto, and the word seemed to linger on his palate as a delicious morsel in the progress of delightful deglutition; but when he uttered the word poor, it was with that "mewling and puking" miserable face, appropriated from time immemorial to the gulping of a black draught.

"No, Lady Dillaway, right about's the next word I shall say to that smooth-looking pauper, Mr. Henry Clements,—to think of his impudence making up to my daughter, indeed! a poo-o-o-r man, too."

"I did not tell you he was poor, Sir Thomas: you have run away with that idea on your own account; the young man has enough

for the present, owes nothing for the past, and reasonable expectations for the——"

"Future, I suppose, ey? what? I hate futures, all the lot of 'em: cash down, ready money, bird in the hand, that's my ticket, Mum: expectations indeed! well, go on, go on; I'm as patient as a—as a mule you see; go on, will you; I may as well hear it all out, Lady Dillaway."

"Well, Sir Thomas, since you think so little of the future, I will not insist on expectations; though I really can only excuse your methods of judging, by the fancy that you are far too prudent in fearing for the future: however, if you will not admit this, let me take you on your own ground, the present; perhaps, Mr. Clements may not possess quite as much as I could wish him, but then surely, dear Thomas, our daughter must have more than——"

I object to seeing oaths in print; unless it must be once in a way, as a needful point of character: probably the reader's sagacity will supply many omissions of mine in the eloquence of Sir Thomas Dillaway, and others. But his calm spouse, nothing daunted, quietly whispered on—"You know, Thomas, you have boasted to me that your capital is doubling every year; penny-postage has made the stationery business most prosperous; and if you were wealthy when the old King knighted you as Lord Mayor, surely you can spare something handsome now for an only daughter, who——"

"Ma'am!" almost barked the affectionate father, "if Maria marries money, she shall have money, and plenty of it, good girl; but if she will persist in wedding a beggar, she may starve, Mum, starve, and all her poverty-stricken brats too, for any pickings they shall get out of my pocket. Ey? what? you pretend to read your Bible, Mum,—don't you know we're commanded to "give to him that hath, and to take away from him that——"

"For shame, Sir Thomas Dillaway!" interrupted the wife, as well she might, for all her quietude: she was a good sort of woman, and her better nature aroused its wrath at this vicious application of a truth so just when applied to morals and graces, so bitterly iniquitous in the case of this world's wealth. I wish that our ex-Lord Mayor's distorted text may not be one of real and common

usage. So, silencing her lord, whose character it was to be overbearing to the meek, but cringing to anything like rebuke or opposition, she forthwith pushed her advantages, adding,—

"Your income is now four thousand a year, as you have told me, Thomas, every hour of every day, since your last lucky hit in the government contract for blue elephants and whitey-browns. We have only John and Maria; and John gets enough out of his own stock-brokering business to keep his curricle, and belong to clubs,—and—alas! my fears are many for my poor dear boy;—I often wish, Thomas, that our John was not so well supplied with money: whereas poor Maria——"

"Tush, Ma'am, you're a fool, and have no respect at all for monied men. Jack's a rich man, Mum—knows a trick or two, sticks at nothing on 'Change, shrewd fellow, and therefore, of course I don't stint him: ha!—he's a regular Witney comforter, that boy,—makes money,—ay, and for all his seeming extravagance, the clever little rogue knows how to keep it, too. If you only knew, Ma'am, if you only knew;—but we don't blab to fools."

I dare say "fools" will hear the wise man's secret some day.

"Well, Thomas, I am sure I have no wish to pry into business transactions; all my present hope is to help the cause of our poor dear Maria."

"Don't call the girl 'poor,' Lady Dillaway: it's no recommendation, I can tell you, though it may be true enough. Girls are a bad spec, unless they marry money. If our girl does this, well;—she will indeed be to me a dear Maria, though not a poo-o-o-r one; if she doesn't, let her bide and be an old maid, for as to marrying this fellow Clements, I'll cut him adrift tomorrow."

"If you do, Sir Thomas, you will break our dear child's heart."

"Heart, Ma'am! what business has my daughter with a heart?" [what, indeed?] "I hate hearts; they were sent, I believe, purposely to make those who are plagued with 'em poo-o-o-r. Heart, indeed! When did heart ever gain money?—ey?—what? It'll give, O yes, plenty, plenty, to charities, and churches, and orphans, and beggars, and anything else, by way of getting rid of gold; but as to gaining—bah! heart indeed—pauperizing bit of

muscle!—save me from wearing under my waistcoat what you're pleased to call a heart. No, Mum, no; if the girl has got a heart to break I've done with her. Heart indeed! she either marries money and my blessing, or marries beggary and my curse; but I should like to know who wants her to marry at all? Let her die an old maid."

Probably this dialogue need go no farther: in the coming chapter we will try to be didactic. Meantime, to apostrophize ten words upon that last heartless sentence:—

"Let her die an old maid." An old maid! how many unrecorded sorrows, how much of cruel disappointment and heart-cankering delay, how oftentimes unwritten tragedies are hidden in that thoughtless little phrase! O the mass of blighted hopes, of slighted affections, of cold neglect, and foolish contumely wrapped up in those three syllables! Kind heart, kind heart, never use them; neither lightly as in scorn, nor sadly as in pity: spare that ungenerous reproach. What! canst thou think that from a feminine breast the lover, the wife, the mother, can be utterly sponged away without long years of bitterness? Can Nature's wounds be cicatrized, or her soft feelings seared, without a thousand secret pangs? Hath it been no trial to see youthful bloom departing, and middle age creep on, without some intimate one to share the solitude of life? Ay, and the coming prospect too,—hath it greater consolations than the retrospect? How faintly common friends can fill that hollow of the heart! how feebly can their kindness, at the warmest, imitate the sympathies and love of married life! And in the days of sickness, or the hour of death,—to be lonely, childless, husbandless, to be lightly cared for, little missed,—who can wonder that all those bruised and broken yearnings should ferment within the solitary mind, and sometimes sour up the milk of human kindness? Be more considerate, more just, more loving to that injured heart of woman; it hath loved deeply in its day; but imperative duty or untoward circumstances nipped those early blossoms, and often generosity towards others, or the constancy of youthful blighted love has made it thus alone. There was an age in this world's history, and may be yet again (if Heart is ever to be monarch of this social sphere), when those who lived and died as Jephthah's

daughter were reckoned worthily with saints and martyrs. Heed thou, thus, of many such, for they have offered up their hundred warm yearnings, a hecatomb of human love, to God, the betrothed of their affections; and they move up and down among this inconsiderate world, doing good, Sisters of Charity, full of pure benevolence, and beneficent beyond the widow's mite. Heed kinder then, and blush for very shame, O man and woman, looking on this noble band of ill-requited virgins; remember all their trials, and imitate their deeds; for among the legion of that unregarded sisterhood whom you coldly call old maids, are often seen the world's chief almoners of warm unselfish sympathy, generous in mind if not in means, and blooming with the immortal youth of charity and kindliness.

CHAPTER II.

How the daughter has a heart; and, what is commoner, a lover.

YES, Maria Dillaway, though Sir Thomas's own daughter, had a heart, a warm and good one: it was her only beauty, but assuredly at once the best adornment and cosmetic in the world. The mixture of two such conflicting characters as her father and mother might (with common Providence to bless the pair) unitedly produce heart; although their plebeian countenances could hardly be expected without a direct miracle to generate beauty. Maria inherited from her father at once his impetuosity and his little button nose: although the latter was neither purple nor pimply, and the former was more generous and better directed: from her mother she derived what looked to any one at first sight very like red hair, along with great natural sweetness of disposition: albeit her locks had less of fire, and her sweetness more of it: sympathy was added to gentleness, zeal to patience, and universal tenderness to a general peace with all the world; for that extreme quietude, almost apathy, alluded to before, having been superseded by paternal impetuosity, the result of all was Heart. She doated on her mother; and (how she contrived this, it is not quite so easy to comprehend) she found a great deal loveable even in her father. But in fact she loved everybody. Charity was the natural atmosphere of her kind and feeling soul—always excusing, assisting, comforting, blessing; charity lent music to her tongue, and added beauty to her eyes—charity gave grace to an otherwise ordinary figure, and lit her freckled cheek with the spirit of loveliness. Let us be just—nay more, let us be partial, to the good looks of poor dear Maria. Notwithstanding the snub nose (it is not snub; who says it is snub?—it is *mignon*, personified good-nature)—notwithstanding the carroty hair (I declare, it was nothing but a fine pale auburn after all)—notwithstanding the peppered face (oh, how sweetly rayed with smiles!) and the com-

mon figure (gentle, unobtrusive, full of delicate attentions)—yes, notwithstanding all these unheroinals, no one who had a heart himself could look upon Maria without pleasure and approval. She was the very incarnation of cheerfulness, kindness, and love: you forgot the greenish color of those eyes which looked so tenderly at you, and so oftentimes were dimmed with tears of unaffected pity; her smile, at any rate, was most enchanting, the very sunshine of an amiable mind; her lips dropped blessings; her brow was an open plain of frankness and candor; sincerity, warmth, disinterested sweet affections threw such a lustre of loveliness over her form, as well might fascinate the mind alive to spiritual beauty: and altogether, in spite of natural defects and disadvantages—*nez retroussé*, Cleopatra locks, and all—no one but those constituted like her materialized father and his kind, ever looked upon Maria without unconsciously admiring her, he scarcely knew for what. Though there appeared little to praise, there certainly was everything to please; and faulty as in all pictorial probability was each lineament of face and line of form taken separately and by detail, the veil of universal charity softened and united them into one harmonious whole, making of Maria Dillaway a most pleasant, comfortable, wife-like little personage.

At least, so thought Henry Clements. Neither was it any sudden fortnight's fancy, but the calm consideration of two full years. Maria's was a character which grew upon your admiration gradually—a character to like at first just a little; then to be led onwards imperceptibly from liking to loving; and thence from fervid summer probably to fever heat. She dawned upon young Henry like the blush of earliest morn, still shining brighter and fairer till glorious day was come.

He had casually made her acquaintance in the common social circle, and even on first introduction had been much pleased, not to say captivated, with her cordial address, frank unsophisticated manners, and winsome looks; he contrasted her to much advantage with the affected coquette, the cold formal prude, the flippant woman of fashion, the empty heads and hollow hearts wherewithal society is peopled. He had long been wearied out with shallow courtesies, frigid compliments, and other conventional hypocrisies up and down the world; and wanted something better to love than

mere surface beauty, mere elegant accomplishment—in a word, he yearned for Heart, and found the object of his longings in affectionate Maria.

This first casual acquaintance he had of course taken every opportunity to improve as best he might, and happily found himself more and more charmed on every fresh occasion. How heartily glad she was to see him!—how unaffectedly sincere in her amiable joy!—how like a kind sister, a sympathizing friend, a very true-love, a dear cheerful warm-hearted girl, who would make the very model for a wife!

It is little wonder that, with all external drawbacks, now well nigh forgotten, the handsome Henry Clements found her so attractive; nor that, following diligently his points of advantage, he progressed from acquaintanceship to intimacy, and intimacy to avowed admiration; and thence (between ourselves) to the resolute measure of engagement.

I say between ourselves, because nobody else in the world knew it but the billing pair of lovers; and even they have got the start of us only by a few hours. As for Henry Clements, he was a free man in all senses, with nobody to bias his will or control his affections—an orphan, unclogged by so much as an uncle or aunt to take him to task on the score of his attachment, or to plague him with impertinent advice. His father, Captain Clements of the 70th, had fallen "gloriously" on the bloody field of Waterloo, and the pensioned widow had survived her gallant hero barely nine winters; leaving little Henry thrown upon the wide world at ten years of age, under the nominal guardianship of some very distant Ulster cousin of her own, a Mackintosh, Mackenzie, or Macfarlane,—it is not yet material which; and as for the lad's little property, his poor patrimony of two hundred a year had hitherto amply sufficed for Harrow and for Cambridge (where he had distinguished himself highly), for his chambers in the Temple, and his quiet bachelor mode of life as a man of six-and-twenty.

Accordingly, our lover took counsel of nobody but Maria's beaming eyes, when he almost unconsciously determined to lay siege to her: he really could not make up his mind to the preliminary formal process of storming Sir Thomas in his counting-

house, at the least until he had made sure that Maria's kind looks were anything more particular than universal charity; and as to Lady Dillaway, it was impossible to broach so delicate a business to her till the daughter had looked favorably as aforesaid, set aside her Ladyship's formidable state of quiescence, and apparent (though only apparent) lack of sympathy. So the lover still went on sunning his soul from time to time in Maria's kindly smiles, until one day, that is, yesterday, they mutually found out by some happy accident how very dear they were to each other; and mutually vowed ever to continue so. It was quite a surprise this even to both of them,—an extemporary unrehearsed outburst of the heart; and Maria discovered herself pledged before she had made direct application to mamma about the business. However, once done, she hastened to confide the secret to her mother's ear, earnestly requesting her to break it to papa. With how little of success we have learnt already.

CHAPTER III.

Paternal Amiabilities.

MARIA, as we know, loved her father, for she loved everything that breathes; but she would not have been human had she not also feared him. In fact, he was to her a very formidable personage, and one would have thought anything but an amiable one. Over Maria's gentle kindness he could domineer as loftily as he would cringe in cowardly humiliation to the boisterous effrontery of that unscrupulous and wily stockjobber, "my son Jack." With the tyranny proper to a little mind, he would trample on the neck of a poor meek daughter's filial duty, desiring to honor its parent by submission; and then, with consistent meanness, would lick the dust like a slave before an undutiful only son, who had amply redeemed all possible criminalities by successful (I did not say honest) gambling in the funds, and otherwise.

Yes! John Dillaway was rich; and, climax to his praise, rich by his own keen skill, independent of his father, though he condescended still to bleed him. In this "money century," as Kohl, the graphic traveller, has called it, riches "cover the multitude of sins;" leaving poor Maria's charity to cover its own naked virtues if it can. So John was the father's darling, notwithstanding the very heartless and unbecoming conduct he had exhibited daily for these thirty years, and the marked scorn wherewithal he treated that pudgy city knight, his dear progenitor; but then, let us repeat it as Sir Thomas did—Jack was rich,—rich, and such a comfort to his father, whereas Maria, poor fool, with all her cheap unmarketable love and duty, never had earned a penny —never could, but was born to be a drain upon him. Therefore did he scorn her, and put aside her kindnesses, because she could not "make money."

For what end on earth should a man make money? It is reasonable to reply, for the happiness' sake of others and himself;

but, in the frequent case of a rich and cold Sir Thomas, what can be the object in such? Not to purchase happiness therewith himself, nor yet to distribute it to others; a very dog in the manger, he snarls above the hay he cannot eat, and is full of any thoughts rather than of giving: whilst, as for his own pleasure, he manifestly will not stop a minute to enjoy a taste of happiness, even if he finds it in his home; nay, more, if it meets him by the way, and wishes to cling about his heart, he will be found often to fling it off with scorn, as a reaper would the wild sweet cornflower in some handful of wheat he is cutting. O Sir Thomas! is not poor Maria's love worth more than all your rich rude Jack's sudden flush of money? is it not a deeper, higher, purer, wiser, more abundant source of pleasure? You have yet to learn the wealth of her affections, and his poverty of soul.

It was not without heart-sickness, believe me, sore days and weeping nights, that affectionate Maria saw her father growing more and more estranged from her. True, he had never met her love so warmly that it was not somewhat checked and chilled; true, his nature had reversed the law of reason, by having systematically treated her with less and less of kindness ever since the nursery: she did seem able to remember something like affection in him while she was a prattling infant; but as the mental daylight dawned apace, and she grew (one would fancy) worthier of a rational creature's love, it strangely had diminished year by year; moreover, she could scarcely look back upon one solitary occasion, whereon her father's voice had instructed her in knowledge, spoken to her in sympathy, or guided her footsteps to religion. Still, habituated as she long had now become to this daily martyrdom of heart, and sorely bruised by coarse and common worldliness as had been every fibre of her feelings, she could not help perceiving that things got worse and worse, as the knight grew richer and richer; and oftentimes her eyes ran over bitterly for coldness and neglect. There was, indeed, her mother to fly to; but she never had been otherwise than a very quiet creature, who made but little show of what feeling she possessed; and then the daughter's loving heart was affectionately jealous of her father too.

"Why should he be so cold, with all his impetuosity; so for-

mal, in spite of his rapidity; so little generous of spirit, notwithstanding all his wonderful prosperity?"

Ah, Maria, if you had not been quite so unsophisticated, you would have left out the latter "notwithstanding." Nothing hardens the heart, dear child, like prosperity; and nothing dries up the affections more effectually than this hot pursuit of wealth. The deeper a man digs into the gold mine, the less able, ay, less willing, is he to breathe the sweet air of upper earth, or to bask in the daylight of heaven: downward, downward still, he casts the anchor of his grovelling affections, and neither can nor will have a heart for anything but gold.

Moreover, have you wondered, dear Maria, at the common fact (one sees it in every street, in every village), that parental love is oftenest at its zenith in the nursery, and then falls lower and lower on the firmament of human life, as the child gets older and older? Look at all dumb brutes, the lower animals of this our earth; is it not thus by nature's law with them? The lioness will perish to preserve that very whelp, whom she will rend a year or two hence, meeting the young lion in the forest; the hen, so careful of her callow brood, will peck at them, and buffet them away, directly they are fully fledged; the cow forgets how much she once loved yonder well-grown heifer; and the terrier-bitch fights for a bit of gristle with her own two-year-old, whom she used to nurse so tenderly, and famished her own bowels to feed. And can you expect that men, who make as little use as possible of Heart, that unlucrative commodity—who only exercise Reason for shrewd purposes of gain, not wise purposes of good, and who might as well belong to Cunningham's "City of O," for any Souls they seem to carry about with them—can you expect that such unaffectioned, unintelligent, unspiritualized animals can rise far above the brute in feeling for their offspring? No, Maria; the nursery plaything grows into the exiled schoolboy; and the poor child, weaned from all he ought to love, soon comes to be regarded in the light of an expensive youth; he is kept at arm's length, unblest, uncaressed, unloved, unknown; then he grows up apace, and tops his father's inches; he is a man now, and may well be turned adrift; if he can manage to make money, they are friends —but if he can only contrive to spend it, enemies. Then the

complacent father moans about ingratitude, for he did his duty by the boy in sending him to school.

O faults and follies of the bygone times, which lingered even to a generation now speedily passing away!—ye are waning with it, and a better dawn has broken on the world. Happily for man, the multiplication of his kind, and pervading competition in all manner of things mercantile, are breaking down monopolies, and hindering unjust accumulation, with its necessary love of gain. "Satisfied with little" is young England's cry; a better motto than the "Craving after much" of their fathers. No longer immersed, single-handed, in a worldly business, which seven competitors now relieve him of; no longer engrossed with the mint of gold gains, which a dozen honest rivals now are sharing with him eagerly, the parent has leisure to instruct his children's minds, to take an interest in their pursuits, and to cultivate their best affections. Home is no longer the place perpetually to be driven from; the voices of paternal duty and domestic love are thrillingly raised to lead the tuneful chorus of society; and fathers, as well as mothers, are beginning to desire that their children may be able to remember them hereafter as the ever sympathizing friend, the wisely indulgent teacher, the guide of their religion, and the guardian of their love; quite as much as the payer of their bills, and the filler of their purses.

The misfortune of a past and passing generation has been, too much money in too few hands; its faults, neglect of duty; its folly, to expect therefrom the too high meed of well-earned gratitude; and from this triple root has grown up social selfishness, a general lack of Heart. No parent ever yet, since the world was, did his duty properly, as God intended him to do it, by the affections of the mind and the yearnings of the heart, as well as by the welfare of the body with its means, and lived to complain of an ungrateful child. He may think he did his duty; oh yes, good easy man, and say so too, very, very bitterly; and the world may echo his most partial verdict, crying shame on the unnatural Goneril and Regan, bad daughters who despise the Lear in old age, or on the dissolute and graceless youth, whose education cost so much and yields so very little. But money cannot compensate that maiden or that youth for early and habitual injustice

done to their budding minds, their sensitive hearts, their craving souls, in higher, deeper, holier things than even cash could buy. "Home affections"—this was the magic phrase inscribed upon the talisman they stole from that graceless youth; and the loss of home affections is scantily counterbalanced at the best by a critical acquaintance with "Dawes's Canons," and "Bos on Ellipses," in his ardent spring of life, and by a little more of the paternal earnings which the Legacy-office gives him in his manhood.

But let us not condemn generations past and passing, and wink at our own-time sins; we have many motes yet in our eyes, not to call them very beams. The infant school, the factory, the Union, and other wholesale centralizations, ruin the affections of our poor. O for the spinning-wheel again within the homely cottage, and those difficult spellings by the grand-dame's knee! There is wisdom and stability in a land thickset with such early local anchorages; but the other is all false, republican, and unaffectioned. So, too, the luxurious city club has cheated many a young pair of their just domestic happiness, for the husband grew dissatisfied with home and all its poor humilities; whilst a bad political philosophy, discouraging marriage and denouncing offspring, has insidiously crept into the very core of private families, setting children against parents and parents against children, because a cold expediency winks at the decay of morals, and all united social influences strike at the sacrifice of Heart.

We are forgetting you, poor affectionate Maria, and yet will it comfort your charity to listen. For the time is coming, yea, now is, when a more generous, though poorer, age will condemn the Mammon frenzy of that which has preceded it. Boldly do we push our standards in advance, pressing on the flying foe, certain that a gallant band will follow. Fearlessly, here and there, is heard the voice of some solitary zealot, some isolated missionary for love and truth and philanthropic good, some dauntless apostle in the cause of Heart, denouncing selfish wealth as the canker of society: and, hark! that voice is not alone; there is a murmur on the breeze as the sound of many waters; it comes, it comes, and the young have caught it up; and manhood hears the thrilling strain that sinks into his soul; and old age, feebly listening,

wonders (never too late) that he had not hitherto been wiser; and the whole social universe, electrically touched from man to man, I hear them—I hear them in their new born-generosities, penitently shouting "God and Heart!" even louder than they execrate the memory of Dagon.

CHAPTER IV.

Excusatory.

It really may be numbered among doubts whether it is possible to exaggerate the dangers into which a fictionist may fall. My marvel is, that any go unstabbed. How on earth did Cervantes continue to grow old, after having pointed the finger of derision at all grave Spain? There is Boccacio, too; he lived to turn threescore, in spite of the thousand husbands and wives, who might pretty well imagine that he spoke of them. Only consider how many villains, drawn to the life, Walter Scott created. What? were there no heads found to fit his many caps, hats, helmets, and other capillary properties? What? are we so blind, so few of friends, that we cannot each pick out of our social circles Mrs. Gore's Dowager, Mrs. Grey's Flirt, Mrs. Trollope's Widow, and Boz's Mrs. Nickleby? Who can help thinking of his lawyer, when he makes acquaintance with those immortal firms Dodson and Fogg, or Quirk, Snap, and Gammon? Is not Wrexhill libellous, and Dr. Hookwell personal? Arise! avenge them both, ye zealous congregations! Why slumber pistols, that should damage Bulwer? Why are the clasp-knives sheathed, which should have drunk the blood of James? Hath every "[dash] good-natured friend" forgotten to be officious, and neglected to demonstrate to relations and acquaintances that this white villain is Mr. A., and that old virgin poor Miss B.? Speak, Plumer Ward, courageous veteran, Have the critics yet forgiven Mr. John Paragraph—forgotten, is impossible? and how is it no housekeeper has arsenicked my soup—O rash recruit, for the mysteries of Perquisite divulged in Mrs. Quarles?

A dangerous craft is the tale-wright's, and difficult as dangerous. Human nature goes in casts, as garden-pots do. Lo, you! the crowd of thumb-pots; mean little tiny minds in multitudes, as near alike as possible. Then there are the frequent thirty-

twos, average "clever creatures" in this mental age, wherein no one can make an ordinary how-d'ye-do acquaintance without being advertised of his or her surprising talents: and to pass by all intermediate sizes, here and there standing by himself, in all the prickly pride of an immortal aloe, some one big pot monopolizes all the cast of earth, domineering over the conservatory as Brutus's colossal Cæsar, or his metempsychosis in a Wellington.

Again: no painter ever yet drew life-likeness, who had not the living models at least in his mind's eye: but no good painter ever yet betrayed the model in his figure; unless (though these instances are rarish too) we except, *pace* Lawrence, the mystery of portraiture. He takes indeed a line here and a color there; but he softens this and heightens that; so that none but he can well discover any trace of Homer's noble head in yonder sightless beggar, or Juno's queenly form in the Welsh woman trudging with her strawberry load to Covent Garden Market.

Flatter not thyself, fair Helen, I have not pictured thee in gentle Grace: tremble not, my little white friend Clatter, thou art by no means Simon Jennings. Dark Caroline Blunt, it is true thou hast fine eyes; nevertheless, in nothing else (I am sorry to assure thee) art thou at all like Emily Warren. Flaunting Lady Busbury, be calm; if you had not been so wrathful I never should have thought of you—undoubtedly you are not the type of Mrs. Tracy.

Why will all these people don my imaginary characters? Truly, it may seem to be a compliment, as proving that they speak from heart to heart, of universal human nature, not unaptly; still is their inventor or creator embarrassed terribly by such unwelcome honors; your precious balms oppress him, gentle friends; lift off your palm branches; indeed, he is unworthy of these petty triumphs; and to be serious, he detests them.

No: once and for all, let a plain first person say it, I abjure personalities; my arrows are shot at a venture; and if they hit any one at all, it is only that he stands in my shaft's way, and the harness of his conscience is unbuckled. The target of my feeble aim is general—to pierce the heart of evil, evil in the form of social heartlessness: it is no fault of mine, if some alarmed particulars will crowd about the mark. Ideal characters, ideal

incidents, ideal scenes,—to these I honestly pledge myself: but as most men have two eyes, being neither naturally monocular nor triocular, so most men of their own special cast have similar distinguishable sympathies.

The overweening love of money is a seed, a soil, and a sun that generates a certain crop: the aim of my poor husbandry is only to reap this; but my sickle does not wish to wound the growers: let them stand aside; or better far, let them help me cut those rank and clogging tares, and bind them up in bundles to be burned. Heart is a sweet-smelling shrub, ill to stand against the chilling breath of worldliness: my small care desires to cherish this; gather round it, friends, shelter it beside me. How many fragrant flowers now are bursting into beauty! how cheering is their scent! how healthful the aroma of their bloom! Pluck them with me; they are sweet, delicate, and lustrous to look upon, even as the night-blowing Cereus.

Henceforth then, social circle, feel at peace with such as I am, whose public parable would teach, without any thought of personality, entirely disclaiming private interpretations: there are other people stout besides one's uncle, other people deaf beside one's aunt. Sir Thomas Dillaway is not alderman Bunce, nor any other friend or foe I wot of; a mere creature of the counting-house, he is a human ledger-mushroom: rub away the mildew from your hearts, if any seem to see yourselves in him: neither have I ventured to transplant Miss Cassiopeia Curtis's red hair to dear Maria's head: imitate her graces, if you will, maiden; but charge me not with copying your locks. Though "my son Jack" be a boisterous big rogue, on 'Change, and off it,—let not mine own honest stockbroker put that hat upon his head, in the monomania that it fits him, because he may heretofore have been both Bull and Bear; and as for any other heroes yet to come upon this scene, to enact the tragedy or comedy of Heart,—"Know all men by these presents,"—your humble servant's will is to smite bad principles, not offending persons; to crusade against evil manners, not his guilty fellow-men.

Wo is me! who am I, that I should satirize my brethren?—Yet, wo is me,—if silently I hide the sin I see. Make me not an offender for a word, seeing that my purposes are good. Be

not hypercritical, for Heart's sake, against a man whose aim it is to help the cause of Heart. Neither count it sufficient to answer me with an inconclusive "*tu quoque*:" I know it, I feel it, I confess it, I would away with it. Heaven send to him that writes, as liberally as to those who read (yea, more, according to his deeper needs and failings) the grace to counteract all Mammonizing blights, and to cultivate this garden of the Heart.

CHAPTER V.

Wherein a well-meaning Mother acts very Foolishly.

RETURNED from her unsuccessful embassage, Lady Dillaway determined, kind calm soul, to hide the bitter truth from poor Maria, that her father was inexorably adverse. A scene was of all things that identical article least liked by the quiescent mother; and that her warm-hearted daughter would enact one, if she heard those echoes of paternal love, was clearly a problem requiring no demonstration.

Accordingly, with well-intentioned kindliness, but shallowish wisdom, and most questionable propriety, Maria was persuaded to believe that her father had hem'd and haw'd a little, had objected no doubt to Henry's lack of money, but would certainly on second thoughts consider the affair more favorably:

"You know your father's way, my love; leave him to himself, and I am sure his better feeling will not fail to plead your cause: it will be prudent, however, just for quiet's sake, to see less of Henry Clements for a day or two, till the novelty of my intelligence blows over. Meantime, do not cry, dear child; take courage, all will be well; and I will give you my free leave to console your Henry too."

"Dearest, dearest mamma, how can I thank you sufficiently for all this? But why may I not now at once fly to papa, tell him all I feel and wish cordially and openly, and touch his dear kind heart? I am sure he would give us both his sanction and his blessing, if he only knew how much I love him, and my own dear Henry."

"Sweet child," sighed out mamma, "I wish he would, I trust he would, I believe indeed he will some day: but be advised by me, Maria, I know your father better than you do; only keep quiet, and all will come round well. Do not broach the subject to him,—be still, quite still; and, above all, be careful that your father does not yet a while meet Mr. Clements."

"But, dearest mamma, how can I be so silent when my heart is full? and then I hate that gloomy sort of secresy. Do let me ask papa, and tell him all myself. Perhaps he himself will kindly break the ice for me, now that your dear mouth has told him all, mamma. How I wish he would!"

"Alas, Maria, you always are so sanguine: your father is not very much given, I fear, to that sort of sociality. No, my love; if you only will be ruled by me, and will do as I do, managing to hold your tongue, I think you need not apprehend many conversational advances on your father's part."

Poor Maria had more than one reason to fear all this was true, too true; so her lip only quivered, and her eyes overflowed as usual.

Thereafter, Lady Dillaway had all the talk to herself, and she smoothly whispered on without let or hindrance; and what between really hoping things kindly of her husband's better feelings, and desiring to lighten the anxieties of dear Maria's heart, she placed the whole affair in such a calm, warm, and glowing Claude-light, as apparently to supply an emendation (no doubt the right reading) to the well-known aphorism,—

"The course of true love never did run smooth-er."

In fine, our warm and confiding Maria ran up to her own room quite elated after that interview; and she heartily thanked God that those dreaded obstacles to her affection were so easily got over, and that her dear, dear father, had proved so kind.

It is quite a work of supererogation to report how speedily the welcome news were made known, by billet-doux, to Henry Clements; but they rather smote his conscience, too, when he reflected that he had not yet made formal petition to the Powers on his own account. To be sure, they (the lovers, to wit) were engaged only yesterday, quite in an unintended though delightful way: and, previously to that important tête-à-tête, however much he may have thought of only dear Maria—however frequently he found himself beside her in the circle of their many mutual friends—however happily he hoped for her love—however foolishly he reveried about her kindness in the solitude of

his Temple garret,—still he never yet had seen occasion to screw his courage to the sticking point, and boldly place his bliss at hard Sir Thomas's disposal. Some day—not yet—perhaps next week, at any rate not exactly to-day,—these were his natural excuses; and they availed him even to the other side of that social Rubicon, engagement. Nevertheless, now at length something must decidedly be done; and, within half an hour, Finsbury's deserted Square echoed to the heroic knock of Mr. Henry Clements, fully determined upon claiming his Maria at her father's hands.

The knight was out; probably, or rather certainly, not yet returned from his counting house in St. Benet's Sherehog. So, perforce, our hero could only have an audience with his lady.

The same glossing over of unpalatable truths—the same quiet-breathing counsel—the same tranquil sort of hopefulness,—fully satisfied the lover that his cause was gained. How could he think otherwise? In the father's absence he had broached that mighty topic to the mother, who even now hailed him as her son, and promised him his father's favor. What could be more delicious than all this? and what more honorable, while prudent, too, and filial, than to acquiesce in Lady Dillaway's fears about her husband's nervousness at the sight of one who was to take from him an only and beloved daughter? It was delicacy itself —charming; and Henry determined to make his presence for the first few days, as scarce as possible in the sight of that affectionate father.

And thus it came to pass that two open and most honorable minds, pledged to heartiest love, could not find one speck of sin in loving on clandestinely. Nay, was it clandestine at all? Is it, then, merely a legal fiction, and not a religious truth, that husband and wife are one? and is it not quite as much a matrimonial as a moral one that father and mother are so too? Was it not decidedly enough to have spoken to the latter, especially when she undertook to answer for the former? Sir Thomas was a man engrossed in business, and, doubtless, left such affairs of the Heart to the kinder keeping of Lady Dillaway. No; there was nothing secret nor clandestine in the matter; and I entirely absolve both Henry and Maria. They could not well

have acted otherwise; if any harm should come to it, the mother is to blame.

Lady Dillaway, without doubt, should have known her husband better; but her tranquil love of our dear Maria seemed to have infatuated her into simply believing—what she so much wished—her happiness secure. She heeded not how little sympathy Sir Thomas felt with lovers; and only encouraged her innocent child to play the dangerous game of unconscious disobedience. Accordingly, consistent with that same quiet kindness of character which had smoothed away all difficulties hitherto, the indulgent mother now allowed the loving pair to meet alone, for the first time permissively, to tell each other all their happiness. Lady Dillaway left the drawing-room, and sent Maria to the heart that beat with hers.

Who shall describe the beauty of that interview,—the gush of first affections bursting up unchecked, unchidden, as hot springs round the Hecla of this icy world! They loved and were beloved, openly, devotedly, sincerely, disinterestedly. Henry never had calculated even once how much the city knight could give his daughter; and as for Maria, if she had not naturally been a girl all heart, the home wherein she was brought up had so disgusted her of still repeated riches, that (it is easy of belief) the very name of poverty would be music to her ears. Accordingly, how they flew into each other's arms, and shed many happy tears, and kissed many kindest kisses, and looked many tenderest things, and said many loving words, "let Petrarch's spirit in heroics sing:" as for our present prosaical Muse, she delights in such affections too naturally and simply to wish to cripple them with rhymes, or confine them in sonnets; she despises decoration of simple and beautiful Nature—gilding gold, and painting lilies; and she loves to throw a veil of secret sanctity over all such heaven-blest attachments. "Hence! ye profane,"—these are no common lovers: I believe their spirits, still united in affections that increase with time, will go down to the valley of death unchangeably together; and will thence emerge to brighter bliss hand in hand throughout eternity—a double Heart with one pulse, loving God, and good, and one another!

CHAPTER VI.

Pleasant Brother John.

"Ho, ho! I suspected as much;—so this fellow Clements has been hanging about us at parties, and dropping in here so often, for the sake of Miss Maria, ey?"—For the door had noisily burst open to let in Mr. John Dillaway, who under-grumbled as above.

"Dear John, I am so rejoiced to see you; I am sure it will make you as happy as myself, brother, to hear the good news: papa and mamma are so kind, and —— I need not introduce to you my —— you have often met him here, John,—Mr. Henry Clements."

"Sir, your most obedient." The vulgar little purse-proud citizen made an impudent sort of distant bow, and looked for all the world like a coated Caliban sarcastically cringing to a well-bred Ferdinand.

Poor Henry felt quite taken aback at such frigid formality; and dear Maria's very heart was in her mouth: but the brother tartly added, "If Mr. Clements wishes to see Sir Thomas —— that's his knock: he was following me close behind; I saw him; but, as I make it a point never to walk with the governor, perhaps it 's as well for you two I dropped in first by way of notice, ey?"

It was a dilemma, certainly,—after all that Lady Dillaway had said and recommended: fortunately, however, her lord the knight, when the street door was opened to him, hastened straightway to his own "study," where he had to consult some treatise upon tare and tret, and a recent pamphlet upon the undoubted social duty, "Run for Gold;" so that awkward rencounter was avoided; and Mr. Clements, taking up his hat, was enabled to accomplish a dignified retreat.

"Dear John, your manner grieves me; I wish you had been kinder to my—to Henry Clements."

"Oh, you do, do you? does the governor know of all this? the fellow 's a beggar."

"For shame, John! you shall not call my noble Henry such names: of course papa has heard all."

"And approves of all this spooneying, ey, miss?"

"Brother, brother, do be gentler with me: mamma's great kindness has smoothed away all objections, and surely you will be glad, John, to have at last a brother of your own to love you as I do."

"Ey? what? another thief to go shares with me when the governor cuts up? Thank you, miss, I 'd rather be excused. You are quite enough, I can tell you, for you make my whole a half; nobody wants a third: much obliged to you, though." [Interjections may as well be understood.]

"O, dear brother, you hurt me, indeed you do: I am sure (if it were right to say so) I would not wish to live a minute, if poor Maria's death could—could make you any happier;—O John, my heart will ——" [Her tears can as readily be understood as his interjections."]

If a domestic railroad could have been cleverly constructed to Maria's chamber from every room in that great house, it would have stood her in good stead; for every day, from some room or other, this poor girl of feeling had to rush up stairs in a torrent of grief. Yearning after sympathy and love, neither felt nor understood by the minds with whom she herded, a trio of worldliness, apathy, and coarse brutality, her bosom ached as an empty void: treated with habitual neglect and cold indifferenee, made various (as occasion might present) by stern rebuke or bitter sarcasm, her heart was sore within its cell, and the poor dear child lived a life of daily martyrdom, her feelings smitten upon the desecrated altar of home by the "foes of her own household."

And not least hostile in the band of those home-foes was this only brother, John. Look at him as he stands alone there, muttering after her as she ran up stairs, "Plague take the girl," and let me tell you what I know of him.

That thickset form, with its pock-marked face, imprisons as base a spirit as Baal's. He was a chip of the old block, and something more. If the father had a heart with "gold" written on it, the son had no heart at all, but gold was in its place. Thoroughly unscrupulous as to ways and means, and simply act-

ing on the phrase "quocunque modo rem," he seemed to have neither conscience of evil, nor dread of danger. In two words, he was a "bold bad" man, divested equally of fear and feeling. The memoirs of his past life hitherto, without controversy very little edifying, may be guessed with quite sufficient accuracy for all characteristic purposes from the coarse, sensual, worldly, and iniquitous result now standing for his portraiture before us. We will waste on such a type of heartlessness as few words as possible: let his conduct show the man.

Just now, this worthy had risen into high favor with his father: we already know why; he had suddenly got rich on his own account, and for that very sufficient reason drew any additional sums he pleased on "the governor's." The trick or two, whereat Sir Thomas hinted, and which so wise a man would not have blabbed to fools, are worthy of record; not merely as illustrative of character, but (in one case at least, as we may find hereafter) for the sake of ulterior consequences.

John Dillaway's first exploit in the money-making line was a clever one. He managed to possess himself of a carrier-pigeon of the Antwerp breed, one among a flock kept for stock-jobbing purposes, by a certain great capitalist; and he contrived that this trained bird should wheel down among the merchants just at noon one fine day in the Royal Exchange. The billet under its wing contained certain cabalistic characters, and the plain-spoken intelligence, "Louis Philippe est mort!" In a minute after these most revolutionizing news, French funds, then at 112, were toppling down below 90, and our prudent John was buying stock in all directions: nay, he even made some considerable bargains at 87. There was a complete panic in the market, and wretched was the man who possessed French fives. The afternoon's work so beautifully finished, John spent that night as true-born Britons are reported to have done before the battle of Hastings, rioting in drunken bliss, and panting for the morrow; and when the morrow came, and the Paris post with it, I must leave it to be understood with what complacency of triumph our enterprising stock-jobber hastened to sell again at 114, pocketing, in the aggregate, a difference of several thousand pounds. It was a feat altogether

to ravish a delighted father's heart, and no wonder that he counted John so great a comfort.

Trick number two had been at once even more lucrative and more dangerous. As a stock-broker, this enterprising Mr. Dillaway had peculiar opportunities of investigating closely certain records in the office for unclaimed dividends: he had an object in such close inspection, and he discovered soon that one Mrs. Jane Mackenzie, of Ballyriggan, near Belfast, was a considerable proprietor, and had made no claim for years. Why should so much money lie idle? Was the woman dead? Probably not; for in that case executors or administrators would have touched it. Legatees and next of kin are little apt to forget such matters. Well then, if this Mrs. Jane Mackenzie is alive, she must be a careless old fool, and we'll try if we can't kill her on paper, and so come in for spoils instead of kith and kin. "Shrewd Jack," as they called him in the Alley, chuckled within himself at so feasible a plot.

Accordingly, in an artful and well-concocted way, which we may readily conceive but it were weary to detail, John Dillaway managed to forge a will of Jane Mackenzie aforesaid; and inducing some dressed-up "ladies" of his acquaintance to personate the weeping nieces of deceased (doubtless with no lack of Irish witnesses beside, competent to swear to anything), he contrived to pass probate at Doctors' Commons, and get 12,043*l.* Bank annuities transferred, as per will, to the two ladies legatees. As the munificent douceur of a thousand pounds apiece had (for the present) stopped the mouths of those supposititious nieces, who stipulated for not a farthing more nor less,—clever John Dillaway a second time had the filial opportunity of rejoicing his father's heart by this wholesale money-making. Ten thousand pounds Bank stock was manifestly another good day's work; and seeing our John had not appeared at all in the transaction, even as the ladies' stockbroker, things were made so safe that the chuckling Knight, when he heard all this (albeit he did tenderly fie, fie a little at first), was soon induced to think "my son Jack" the very best boy and the very cleverest dog in Christendom: at once a parent's pride and joy. Yes, Lady Dillaway—such a comfort! And the worshipful stationer apostrophized "rich Jack" with lips

that seemed to smack of Creasy's Brighton Sauce, whilst his calm spouse appeared to acquiesce in her amiable John's good fortune. The mystified mother little guessed that it was felony.

This good son's new-born wealth, besides the now liberal paternal largess (for his allowance grew larger in proportion as he might seem to need it less), of course availed to introduce him to some fashionable and estimable circles of society, whither it might not at all times be discreet in us to follow him; amongst other places, whether or not the Pandemonium in Jermyn Street proved to him another gold mine, we have not yet heard; but John Dillaway was often there, the intimate friend of many splendid cavaliers who lived upon their industry, familiar with a whole rookery of blacklegs, patron of two or three pigeonable city sparks, and, on the whole, flusher of money than ever. His quiet mother, if she cared about her son at all, and probably she did care when her health permitted, might well be apprehensive on the score of that increasing wealth which made the father's joy.

However, with all his prosperity, Mr. John as yet professed himself by no means satisfied; he was far too greedy of gain, and ever since he had come to man's estate, had amiably longed to be an only child. Not that he heeded a monopoly of the parental feelings and affections, nor even that he meditated murdering Maria,—oh dear no, rather too troublesome that, and quite unnecessary; it would be entirely sufficient if he could manage so to influence his father as to cut that superfluous sister Maria very short indeed in the matter of cash. With this generous and amiable view, he now for a course of sundry years had whispered, back-bitten, and lied; he had, as occasion offered, taken mean advantages of Maria's outspeaking honesty, had set her warm-hearted sayings and charitable doings in the falsest lights, and had entirely "mildewed the ear" of her listening papa. The Knight in truth listened unreluctantly; it was consolation, if not happiness to him, if he could make or find excuses for harshness to a being who would not worship wealth; it would be joy and pride, and an honor to his idol, if he should keep Maria pretty short of cash, and so make her its own preciousness; triumphant would he feel, as a merely-moneyed man, to see troublesome, obtrusive Heart, with all its win-ways and whimperings, and incom-

prehensible Spirituality, with its sermons and its prayers, bending before him "for a bit of bread." Yes, poor loving disinterested Maria ran every chance of being disinherited, from the false witness of her brother, simply because she gave him antecedent opportunities, by her honest likings and dislikings, by her bold rebuke of wrong and open zeal for right, by her scorn of hypocrisies as to what she did feel or did not feel, and by the unpopular fact that she wore a heart, and refused to be the galley-slave of gold.

"Oh, ho, then," said our crafty John, "we shall soon set this all right with our Governor: thank you for the chance, Miss Maria. If father doesn't kick out this Clements, and cut you off with a shilling, he is not Sir Thomas, and I am not his son."

CHAPTER VII.

Providence sees fit to help Villainy.

"Now that's what I call bones."

It was a currish image, suggestive of the choicest satisfaction. Let us try to discover what good news such an idiosyncrasy as that of John Dillaway would be pleased to designate as "bones." He had forthwith gone to his father's room as merry at the chance of ousting poor Maria, as the heartlessness of avarice could make him; and omnipresent authorship jotted down the dialogue that follows:

"So, governor, there's to be a wedding here, I find; when does it come off?"

"Ey, what? a wedding? whose?"

"Oh, ho,—you don't know, ey? I guessed as much: what do you think now of our laughing and crying and kissing and praying Miss Maria with ——"

"Not that beggar Clements? Ey, what? d——" &c., &c.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! I thought so; why not, governor? Are you an old mole, that you haven't seen it these six weeks? Are you stone deaf, that all their pretty speeches have been wasted on you? All I can say is, that if Mr. and Mrs. Clements an't spliced, it's pretty well time they should be, and ——"

Sir Thomas Dillaway rattled out so terrible an oath about Maria's disinheritance if she ventured upon a marriage, that even John was staggered at such a dreadful curse; nevertheless, an instantaneous reflection soon caused that curse to be viewed metaphorically as a "bone;" and the generous brother cautiously proceeded,—

"Why, governor, all this is very odd, must say; when I caught 'em kissing up there ten minutes ago, they were sharp enough to swear you knew all about it, and that you were so 'very, very kind.'"

How is it possible, intelligent reader, to avoid perpetual allusion to an oath? We must not pare the lion's claws, and give bad men soft speeches: prithee supply an occasional interjection, and believe that in this place Sir Thomas swore most awfully; then, in a complete frenzy, he vowed that he "would turn Maria out of house and home this minute." This was another "bone," clearly.

But it was now becoming politic to calm him. Shrewd Jack was well aware that Maria would relinquish all, and sacrifice, not merely her own heart, but her Henry's too, rather than be guilty of filial disobedience. All this storming, hopeful as it looked, might still be premature, and do no substantial good; nay, if this wrath broke out too soon, Maria would at once give way, become more dutiful than ever, and his golden chance was gone. No: they were not married yet. Let the wedding somehow first take place, and then, and then—! for now he knew which way the wind blew; so the scheming youth calmed his rising triumphs, and counselled his progenitor as follows:—

"Well, governor, I never saw so green a blade in all my born days. Can't you see, now, that it's all cram this just to put you in spirits, old boy, in case of such things happening? It was wicked too of me to tease you so,—but I'm so jolly, governor; such luck in Jermyn Street,—I knew you'd like a joke served with sauce as rich as this is, ey? only look!" It was half a hatful of bank notes raked up at the hazard table.

Sir Thomas's grey eyes darted swiftly at the spoil; often as he had warned and scolded Jack about the matter of Jermyn Street (for Jack was bold enough never to conceal one of his little foibles), the father had now nothing to object; for, in his philosophy, the end justified the means. With most of this wise world, he looked upon success as in the nature of virtue, and failure as the surest sign of vice; accordingly, his ire was diverted on the moment, and blazed in admiration of son Jack: and that estimable creature immediately determined it was wise to speak in tones of unwonted affection respecting his sister.

"Now, governor, I put it to you plump, isn't this hatful enough to make a man beside himself, so as not to stick at a white lie or two? Dear Maria there is no more going to become a Mrs. Cle-

ments than you are; she cut the fellow dead long ago: so mind, that's a tough old bird, you don't say one word to her about him; it would be just raking up the cinders again, you know, and you might be fool enough to raise a flame. No, governor, if it 's any consolation to you, that pauper connection has been all at an end this month; not but what the beggar's got my mother's ear still, I fancy; but as to Maria, she detests him. So take my advice, and don't tease the poor girl about the business. Now, then, that this is all settled, and now that you're the merrier for that silly bit of storming at nothing, just listen: the wedding's my own!—isn't Jack Dillaway a clever fellow now, to have caught a Right Honorable Ladyship, with a park in Yorkshire, a palace in Wales and a mansion in Grosvenor Square?"

At this extempore invention, the delighted parent rained so many blessings on his progeny, that John knew the tide was turned at once. Our ex-Lord Mayor had high ambitions, dating from the year of glory onwards; so nothing could be more prudent or well-timed than this ideal aristocratic connection. Jack was a good fellow, a dear boy; and he added to his apparent amiabilities now by reiterating counsels of kindness and silence towards "poor dear sister Maria, whom he had been making the scape-goat all this time;" after which done, our stock-jobber feigned a pressing engagement with some fashionable friends, and left his father to ruminate upon his worth in lonely admiration.

Well; if that clever and gratuitous lie was not another "bone," I am at a loss to know what could be a "bone" to such a hound: therefore it appears that Dillaway had three of them at least to gladden him in solitude; and he went on revealing to wonder-stricken angels, and to us, the secrets of his crafty soul, as he thus soliloquized:—

"Yes, marry the fools first, and then for spoils at leisure; it wo'n't be easy though, she's so consummate filial, as he so bloated up with honor. They'll never wed, I'm clear, unless the governor's by to bless 'em; and as to managing that and the cutting-adrift scheme too, one kills the other. How the deuce to do it?—Eh,—do I see a light?"

He did. A light lurid sulphurous gleam upon the midnight of

his mind seemed to show the way before him, as wisp-fire in a marsh. He did see a light, and its character was this.

Quite aware of his mother's tranquil hopefulness, and that his kind good sister was ingenuous as the day, he soon apprehended the state of affairs; and, resolving to increase those misunderstandings on all sides, he quickly perceived that he could triumph in the keen Machiavellian policy, "divide et impera." The plan became more obvious as he calmly thought it out. Evidently his first step must be to ingratiate himself with both Henry and Maria, as the sympathizing brother, a very easy task among such charitable fools: number two should be to persuade them, as the mother did, that Sir Thomas, generally a reserved unsocial man at home (and that in especial to Maria), was very nervous at the thought of losing his dear daughter, and (while he acquiesced in the common fate of parents and the usual way of the world) begged that his coming bereavement might be obtruded on him as little as possible—Mr. Clements always to avoid him, and Maria to hold her tongue: number three, to amuse his father all the while by the prospect of his own high alliance, so as effectually to hoodwink him from what was going on: and, number four, to send him up to Yorkshire a week hence (on some fool's errand to inquire after the imaginary Countess's imaginary mortgages), leaving behind him an autograph epistle (which our John well knew how to write) recommending "that the ceremony be performed immediately and in his absence, to spare his feelings on the spot," mentioning "Son John as his worthy substitute to give dear Maria away," and inclosing them at once his "blessing and a hundred pound note to help them on their honeymoon."

John Dillaway, if craft be virtue, thou art an archangel: but if Heaven's chief requirement is the Heart, thou art very like a devil,—very. If selfishness deserves the need of praise, who more honorable than thou art? But if a heartless man can never reach to happiness, I know who will live to curse the hour of his birth, and is doomed to perish miserably.

It was a clever scheme, and had unscrupulous hands to work it. Mystified by quiet Lady Dillaway as our lovers had been from the first, entirely unsuspicious of all guile, and rejoicing in their brother's marvellous amiability, never surely were such happy

days; always together while the knight was at his counting-house, they gladly acquiesced in his beautifully paternal nervousness; it was a delightful trait of character in the dear old man; and a very respectable proof that Love is keen-eyed enough to believe what it wishes, but is stone-blind to anything that might possibly counteract its hopes. Then again, the mother was a close ally; for having set her quiet heart upon the match, Lady Dillaway at once encouraged all John's sympathetic scheme, on the prudent principle of getting the young couple inextricably married first, and then obliging her lord to be reconciled afterwards to what he could not help. Sir Thomas himself, poor blinkered creature, was full of the most aristocratical and wealthy fancies, and only yearned to inspect the acres of his future honorable grandchildren. He was, from these fanciful causes, unusually affable and indulgent to Maria; spoke so kindly always that she was all but dissolving thrice a day; and, from his constant reveries about the Countess, appeared perpetually to be brooding over dear Maria's soon approaching loss. Poor girl, more than once she had determined to give it all up, and make her father happy by serving him still in single blessedness: but then, how could she break dear Henry's heart, as well as her own? No, no: they should live very near to Finsbury Square, and be in and out constantly, and papa should never miss her: how delightful was all this!

As for John himself (our heartless model-man, strange contrast to Maria's perfect charity!) he chuckled hugely as his scheme now ripened fast. He had long been putting all things in train for the wedding to-morrow. Everybody knew it except Sir Thomas, who, what between Jack's prudent watchfulness, his habitual counting-house hours, his usually unsocial silence, and his now asserted wish for "not one word upon the subject," was at once kept in total ignorance of all; and yet, as ambassadorial John constantly gave out to Clements and Maria, in an amiable nervous state of natural acquiescence. Next day, then, the besotted father was about to be packed post for Yorkshire; the important letter, with its inclosed bank note, was already written and sealed, as like the governor's hand as possible; a license had been long ago provided, and the clergyman bespoke, by the brotherly officiousness of John; neither Henry Clements, who was too delicate, too

unsuspecting for prudent business-papers, nor Maria, whose heart was never likely to have conceived the thought, had even once alluded to a settlement; Lady Dillaway was lying, as her wont was, on her habitual sofa, in tranquil ecstasy at to-morrow morning's wedding: and Holy Providence, for wise purposes no doubt, had seen fit to aid a villain in his deep-laid treacherous designs.

The Wednesday dawned: Sir Thomas was to be off early, poor man, all agog for Right Honorable acres; and Maria could no longer restrain the expression of her glad and grateful feelings. Up she got by six, threw herself in her kind dear father's way; and though, to spare his feelings, she said not a word about the marriage, prayed him on her knees for a blessing. The startled parent, believing all this frantic show of feeling was sufficiently to be accounted for by his own long and no doubt dangerous journey, blessed her as devoutly as ever he could; and when the carriage drove away, left her in his study overcome with joy, affection, and admiration of his fine heart, exquisite sensibilities, and generous feelings. Then, as a crowning stone to all the bliss, if any lingering doubt existed in the mind of Clements, who had more than once expressed dislike at Sir Thomas's silent and unsatisfying sympathy—the letter, the letter, whereof kind brother John, secretly initiated, had some days forewarned them of its probability—that letter which explained at once all a father's kind anxieties, and made up for all his cold reserve, was found on Sir Thomas's own table! How amiable, how beautifully sensitive, how liberal too! Lady Dillaway plumed herself in a whispering transport upon her just appreciation of the father's better feelings; a kinder heart manifestly never existed than her husband's, though he did take strange methods of proving it: the bridesmaids, two daughters of a friend and neighbor, privy to the coming mystery three days, approved highly of so unobtrusive an old gentleman: Maria was all pantings, blushings, weepings, and rejoicings; Henry Clements, handsome, pale and agitated; perhaps misgiving too, and a little displeased at the father's absence: however, Mr. John Dillaway gave away the bride with a most paternal air; and, just as Sir Thomas was changing horses at Huntingdon, our innocent lovers were indissolubly married.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Rogue's Triumph.

NEVER was there such a happy couple; nor a more auspicious day. Away they went, in deep delight, too joyful to be merry, in a holy transport of affection, and its dearest hope fulfilled. They seemed to be in love with all the world, for everything around them wore a lustre of deliciousness: and when the smoking posters left them at Salt hill, and that well-matched husband and wife sat down to their first boiled fowl, it would probably be a bathos to allude to angelic bliss; but they nevertheless were, and knew they were, the happiest of mortals. If anything could add to Henry's self-complacency at that moment, it was the recollection of his own truly disinterested conduct; for only yesterday he had transferred all his little property to that kind and brotherly fellow John Dillaway, in trust for Maria Clements, should any possible reverse of fortune affect her father's or his own prosperity. Yes; and John had been so wise as to make the two hundred a year already a third more, by investing (as he said) what had been a few thousand of three per cents. in some capital "independent" Bank shares of Australasia—safe as a mountain, and productive as a valley.

All this appeared very prosperous and pleasant: but we, of the initiated into the secrets of character, may reasonably apprehend that Henry's little all would have been safer anywhere than in Dillaway's possession: and "possession," I am sorry to declare, is a word used advisedly; for Mr. John required a largish floating capital to enable him to go the desperate lengths he did at hazard and rouge-et-noir; and I am afraid that if Mr. or Mrs. Clements were to receive any of those so-called Austral dividends, they would only have been taking 300*l.* a year out of their principal moneys in John's immaculate keeping.

Leaving then those wedded lovers to their honeymoon of joy, and shrewd Jack gloating not merely over the full success of his nefarious plan, but also over this unexpected acquisition of poor Clement's few thousands, let us return to Sir Thomas—or, to be quite accurate, let us return with him.

In high dudgeon, full of fire and fury, back rushed the Knight, sore under the sense of having been made an April-fool of in July; for no one in the place, whereto he went, had ever heard of a widow'd Countess of Lancing; and her Ladyship's acres, if anywhere at all, were undoubtedly not in the North Riding. But clever son John, meeting his indignant father on the threshold, soon made all that right by a word.

"Well, if ever! why, stupid, I said Diddlington, not Darlington."

Into the accuracy of this distinction it is needless to inquire: and then the ingenuous youth went on to observe—

"But all's right as it is now; you may as well not have seen the property, and better, too, as things have turned out roughly, governor: the match is off, and you may well congratulate me. Such an escape,—I just discovered it, and was barely in time: you hadn't been gone two hours when I found it all out, through a clever devil of a lawyer, who was hired by my father's son to look into incumbrances, and keep a sharp look-out for a mutual settlement;—that old harridan of a Ladyship is over head and ears in debt; and it seems, I was to have paid all straight, or *i.e.* you, Governor, ey? As to the Yorkshire acres, the old woman had but a life interest in the mere bit that wasn't deeply mortgaged—and not a very long life either, seeing she is 70. So, bless your clever boy again, old Governor, he's free."

The Knight had nothing to object: Jack's ready lie had plenty of reason in it: and so he blessed his clever boy again.

"But I say, Governor, I rather think that you've astonished us all: what on earth made you turn so soft of a sudden, and write that letter?"

"What letter? ey? what?"—Sir Thomas might well inquire.

"That's a good joke, Governor,—you keep it up to the last, I see; what a close old file it is! What letter? why, the letter you wrote to Maria and her lord, telling them to marry."

"Marry? ey?—what, Maria? what—what is it all?" The poor old man was thoroughly bewildered.

"Well done, Governor, bravo! you carry it off as cleverly as if you were an actor; do you mean to say now you didn't leave a letter behind you here upon your table, bidding Maria marry in your absence to spare your paternal feelings (kind old boy, it is, too!), and enclosing them 100*l.* for the honeymoon?"

The mystified father made some inarticulate expression of ignorant amazement, and our stock-jobber went on:—

"So of course they're married and off—Mr. and Mrs. Cle——"

A whirlwind of disastrous imprecations cut all short; and then in a voice choked with passion he gasped out,—

"But—but are they married, are they married? how do you know it? can't we catch 'em first? ey, what?"

"How do I know it? that's a good un now, father, when I had it under your hand and seal to give the girl away myself instead of you? Do you mean to say you didn't write that letter?"

"Boy, I tell you, I've written nothing—I know nothing; you speak in riddles."

"Well then, Governor, if I do, I'll try to guess 'em: I begin to see how it was all brought about,—but they did it cleverly too, and were quite too many for me. Only listen: that fellow Clements, ay, and Miss Maria too (artful minx, I know her), must have forged a letter as if from you to get poor fools, me and my mother, to see 'em spliced, while you were tooling to Yorkshire."

"Impossible—ey?—what? I'll—I'll—I'll—"

"Now, Governor, don't stand there doing nothing but denying all I say; only you go yourself, and ask my mother if she didn't see the letter,—if they didn't marry upon it, and if that precious sister of mine doesn't richly deserve everything she'll some day get from her affectionate, her excellent, her ill-used father?"

Iago's self, or his master, smooth-tongued Belial, could not have managed matters better.

The incredulous Knight, scarcely able to discover how far it might not still be all a joke, especially after his Yorkshire expedition, rushed up to Lady Dillaway; on her usual sofa, quietly knitting, and thinking of her Maria's second day of happiness.

"So, Ma'am—ey? what? is it true? are they married? is it true? married—ey, what?"

"Certainly, Thomas, they were only too glad, and I will add, so was I, to get your kind——"

"Mine? I give leave? ey, what? Madam, we're cheated, fooled—I never wrote any letter."

"Most astonishing; I saw it myself, Thomas, your own hand; and our dear John too."

"Ay, ay,—he sees through it all, and so do I now—ey, what? that precious pair of rogues forged it! Now, Ma'am, what don't they deserve, I should like to know?"

It was quite a blow, and a very hard one, to the poor tranquil mother. Could her dear Maria really have been so base, and that noble-looking Henry too? how dreadfully deceived in them, if this proved true! And how could she think it false? A letter contrived to expedite their marriage in the father's casual absence, which no one could have thought of writing but Sir Thomas himself, or the impatient lovers. So poor Lady Dillaway could only fall a crying very miserably; whereupon her husband more than half suspected her of being an accomplice in the despicable plot.

"Now then, Ma'am, I'm determined: as they are married, the thing's at an end; we can't untie that knot,—but, once tied, I've done with the girl; they may starve, for any help they'll get of me: and as for you, Mum, give 'em money at your peril;—stay, to make sure of it, Lady Dillaway, I shall stint you to whatever you choose to ask me for out of my own pocket; never draw another cheque on Jones's, do you hear?—ey?—what? for your cheques shall not be honored, Ma'am. And now, from this hour, you and I have only one child, John."

"Oh, Thomas, Thomas, be merciful to poor Maria: indeed, she was deceived; she believed it all,—poor Maria!"

"Ma'am, never mention that woman again,—ey?—what?—deceived? Yes, she deceived you, and me, and John, and all. Wicked wretch!—and all to marry a beggar! Well, Ma'am, there's one comfort left; the fellow married her for money, and he's caught in his own trap; never a penny of mine shall either of them see. Henceforth, Lady Dillaway, we have no daughter; dear John is the only child left us for old age."

In spite of himself, of wrath, and disappointment, the father spoke in a moved and broken manner; and his weeping wife attempted to explain, console, and soothe him; but all in vain—he was inexorable and inveterate against those mean deceivers. To say truth, the poor mother was staggered too, especially when her managing son set all the matter in what he stated to be the right light; for he had, the whole business through, whispered so separately to each, and had seemed to say so little openly (making his mother believe that his sister told him of the coming letter, and a choice variety of other embellishments), that he was now looked upon as the very martyr to roguish plotting, in having been induced to give away his sister. Excellent mistaken John!

And forthwith John became installed sole heir, proving the most dutiful of sons: how glibly would he tell them any sort of welcome news, original or selected; how many anecdotes could he invent to prove his own merits and certain other folks' deficiencies; how amiably would he fetch and carry slippers and smelling bottles, and write notes, and read newspapers, and make himself everything by turns (he devoutly hoped it would be nothing long) to his poor dead parents, as became an only child! It was quite affecting,—and both father and mother, softened in spite of themselves at the loss of that Maria, often would talk over the new-found virtues of their most exemplary son. His character came out now with fivefold lustre when contrasted with his former usual ruggedness: no widow ever had a one sick child more tender, more considerate, more dutiful, than rude Jack Dillaway.

He gained his end; saw the new will signed; earwigged the lawyer; and kept a copy of it.

CHAPTER IX.

Falsewitness kills a Mother, and would willingly starve a Sister.

DAY by day, letters, doubtless full of happiness and Heart, were left by the promiscuous and undiscerning postman at the house in Finsbury Square, from our excellent calumniated couple; but, seeing that there were always two sieves waiting ready to sift before it came to Lady Dillaway's turn—to wit, John in the hall, and Sir Thomas in his study, it came to pass that every letter with those malefactors' hand and seal on it got burnt instanter, and unopened.

How many troubles might mankind be spared if they would only stop to hear each other's explanations! How many ailments, both of body and soul, if explanations only came more frequently and freely! Melancholy from that dreadful doubt, and all these cold delays, viewing her daughter as a criminal, the husband as a swindler, and all this long course of silence as very, very heartless and seemingly conclusive of their guilt, the poor mother sickened fast upon her couch: she had for years always been an invalid, wan and wo-begone, living upon ether, gum, and chicken broth; but her white skin now grew whiter, her faint voice fainter, the energies of life in her debilitated frame weaker than ever; it was no mere hypochondria, or other fanciful malady: her calm heart seemed to be dying down within her, as a plant that has earth-grubs gnawing at its root—she grew very ill. Days, weeks of silence—her heart was sick with hope deferred. How could Maria, with all her seeming warmth, treat her with such utter negligence? But now the honeymoon was coming to an end: they must call and see her some day again, surely; how strangely unkind not to answer those motherly and anxious letters, sent to their first known stage, Salt Hill, and thereafter to be forwarded.

O cold continued crime! Bad man, bad man, thy mother's own handwriting shall plead against thee at the last dread day.

For those coveted letters of affection, often sent on both those loving parts, had been regularly and ruthlessly intercepted, opened, mocked, and burnt! How could the man have stood case-proof against those letters—his mother's anxious outbursts of affection towards a lost, an innocent, a calumniated sister? For selfishness had dried up in that hard and wily man all the milk of human kindness.

And our loving pair, upon their travels, were as much hurt and surprised at this long silence as poor Lady Dillaway herself: it was most mysterious, inexplicable. The only letter they had received ever since they had left home was one—only one, from John, which had frightened them exceedingly. Some practical joker (the bridesmaid's brother was suspected), by way of giving Maria a present on her approaching wedding, as it would seem, had cleverly imitated her father's handwriting, and—that letter was a forgery! to everybody's great amazement. Nobody could, according to his own account, be kinder than John, who had done more than mortal things to appease his father; but the old man remained implacable. It was a meanly-contrived clandestine match, he said; and he never intended to set eyes on them again! As for John, he in that letter had strongly counselled them to keep away, and trust to him for bringing his father round. In the midst of their terrible dilemma, kind brother John seemed as an angel sent by heaven to assist them.

Dear children of affection and calamity! how innocently did they walk into the snare; and how closely doth the wicked man draw his toils around them. Who can accuse them of any wrong (the hopefulness of love considered) in point either of honor or duty? And shall they not be righted at the last? It may be so—it shall be so: but Holy Providence hath purposes of good in plunging those twin wedded hearts deep beneath the billows of earthly destitution. The wicked must prosper for a while, in this as in a million other cases, and the good struggle for their season with adversity; that the one may be destroyed for ever, and the others may add to this world's wealth the incalculable riches of Another.

They had spent the first few weeks of marriage among the pleasant lakes and hills of Westmoreland and Cumberland, wan-

dering together, in delightful interchange of thought, from glen to glen, from tairn to tairn, all about Ambleside, Helvellyn, and Lodore, Ullswater, Saddleback, and Schiddaw. Maria's ever-flickering smile seemed to throw a sunbeam over the darkest moor, even in those darkest hours of doubt, heart-sickening anxiety, and grief at the neglect which they experienced; whilst Henry's well-informed good sense not only availed to cheer the sad Maria, but made every rock a point of interest, and showed every little flower a miracle of wisdom. There were hundreds of extemporaneous "lovers' seats," where they had "rested, to be thankful" for the past, joyful for the present, and hopeful for the future; and every ramble that they took might deservedly take the name, style, and title of a "lover's walk!" Happy times, happy times! but still there might be happier; yes, and happiest, too, they seemed to whisper, if ever they should have a merry little nursery of prattling boys and girls! But I am not so entirely in the confidence of those young folks as to be certain about what they seemed to whisper: in that pretty prattling sentence were they not getting a little beyond the honeymoon? Yes, yes, young Hymen is too full of new-found pleasure to heed those holier joys of calm old marriage: for wedded love is as a coil of line, lengthening with the lapse of years, fitted and intended, day after day, to be continually sounding a lower and a lower deep in the ocean of happiness.

Returned to town, it was the immediate care of our fond, confused, and unfortunate young couple to call at the old house in Finsbury Square; where, to their great dismay and misery, they encountered a formal standing order for their non-admission. The domestics were new, had been strictly warned against the name of Clements, and, in effect, were creatures of the worthy John. It was a deplorable business; they did not know what to think, nor how to act. Letters left at the door, couched in whatever terms of humility, kindliness, and just excuse, were equally unavailing; for the Cerberus there was too well sopped by pleasant brother John ever to deliver them to any one but him. It was entirely hopeless—extraordinary—a most wretched state of things: what were they to do? The only practicable mode of getting at Sir Thomas, and, therefore, at some explanation of these myste-

ries, was obviously to watch for him, and meet him in the street. As for Lady Dillaway, she was very ill, and kept her chamber, which was as resolutely guarded from incursion or excursion as Danae's herself,—yea, more so, for gold was added to her guards: Sir Thomas, going to and from his counting-house, appeared to be the only weak point in the enemy's fortifications.

Poor old man! he was, or thought he was, harder, colder, more inveterate than ever: and his duteous son John rarely let him venture out alone, for fear of some such meeting, casual or intended. Accordingly, one day when the Clements and the Dillaways mutually spied each other afar off, and a junction seemed inevitable, John's promptitude bade his father (generously as it looked, for paternal peace of mind's sake) return a few paces, get into a cab, and so slip home, the whilst he valiantly stepped forward to meet the enemy.

"Mr. Clements! my father (I grieve to say) will hear no reason, nor any excuse whatever; he totally refuses to see you or Mrs. Clements."

"O dearest John! what have I done,—what has Henry done, that papa, and you, and dear mamma, should all be so unkind to us?"

"You have married, Mrs. Clements, contrary to your father's wish and knowledge; and he has cast you off—I must say—deservedly."

"Brother, brother! you know I was deceived, and Henry too. This is cruel, most cruel: let me see my beloved father but one moment!"

"His commands are to the contrary, madam; and I at least obey them. Henceforth you are a stranger to us all."

The poor broken-hearted girl fell into her husband's arms, stone-white: but her hard brother, making no account whatever of all that show of feeling, only took the trouble quietly to address Henry Clements. "Misfortunes never come single, they say; it is no fault of mine if the proverb hits Mr. Henry Clements. I am sorry to have to tell you, sir, that the Austral Independent Bank has stopped payment, and is not expected to refund to its depositors or shareholders one penny in the pound."

"Impossible, Mr. Dillaway! You answered for its stability

yourself: and the proposition came originally from you. I hope surely, surely, you may have been misinformed of these bad news."

"It is true, sir—too true for you: the wisest man on 'change is often out of reckoning. I have nothing now of yours in my hands, sir: you are aware that no writings passed between us."

"Great Heaven! be just and merciful! Are we, then, to be utterly ruined?"

"Really, sir, you know your own affairs better than I can.—Your servant, Mr. Clements."

O hard and wicked heart!—what will not such a miscreant do for money? Nothing, I am clear, but the cowardly fear of discovery prevents John Dillaway from becoming a positive parricide by very arsenic or razor, so as to grasp his cheated father's will and wealth. And this assertion will appear not in the least uncharitable, when the reader is in this place reminded that Henry Clements' own little property had never been Australized at all, but was still safe and snug in the coffers of crafty John. Jermyn Street—or the sharpers congregated there—had drained him very considerably; all his own ill-got gains had been gradually raked away by the croupier at the gaming-table; and unsuspecting Henry's little trust-fund was to be the next bank on which the brother played.

Poor Henry and Maria! What will they do? where will they go? how will they live? Hard questions all, not to be answered in a hurry. We shall see. There was one comfort, though, amidst all their misery;—they did not find the adage a true one, which alludes to poverty coming in at the door, and love flying out of the window; for they never loved each other more deeply—more devotedly—than when daily bread was growing a scarcity, and daily life almost a burden. But we are anticipating.

And how fared the parents all this while? was the erring daughter entirely forgotten? No, no. Son John, indeed, took good care to hinder any amicable feelings of relapse to intrude upon his father's resolution. But the old man was not easy, nevertheless; often thought of poor Maria; and could not clearly make out who had forged the letter. Had it not been for that wicked brother John, a meeting—an explanation—a reconciliation

—would undoubtedly have taken place: but he was shrewd enough to keep them asunder, and did not take much to heart his father's altered spirits and breaking state of health: his will and wealth were seemingly all the nearer.

And what of that poor stricken mother? Wasted to a shadow, feverish, and weak, she lay for weeks, counting the dreary hours, till she heard of dear though unnatural Maria. Oh! the heartless caitiff, John! will he thus watch his mother die by inches, when one true word from his lips could restore her to tranquillity and health? Yes, he would—he did—the wretch! She gradually pined—waned—wasted; the candle of her life burnt down into the hollow socket—glimmering awhile—flared and reeled, and then—one night, quietly and suddenly—went out! She entered on the world of spirits, where all secrets show revealed; and there she read, almost before she died,—whilst yet the black curtain of eternity was gradually rising to receive her,—the innocence of good Maria, and the deep-stained villainy of John. Her last words—uttered supernaturally from her quiescence, with the fervor of a visionary whose ken is more than mortal,—were, "Look, look, Thomas!—beware of John. O poor, poor innocent outcast!—O rich, rich heart of love,—Maria! my Mari—a—!"

CHAPTER X.

How to help one's self.

WHERE then did they live, and how,—that noble and calumniated couple? They had done no wrong, nor even, as it seems to us, the semblance of wrong, unless it be by having acquiesced in the foolishness of secresy, and thus aided the contrivance of false witness; for aught else, their only social error had been lack of business caution among business men. Feeling generously themselves, they gave others credit for the like good feeling; acting upon honorable impulse, they believed that other men would act so too. Heart was the hindrance in their way;—too much sensitiveness towards all about them; too swift a surrender of the judgment to the affections; too imprudent a reliance upon other men of the world; though, when they trusted to a father's love, and a brother's honesty, prudence herself might have almost been dispensed with. Machinations of the wicked and the shrewd hemmed them in to their un-doing: and really, they, children more or less of affluent homes, born and bred in plenty, who had moved all their lives long in circles of comparative wealth and wastefulness, now seemed likely to come to the galling want of necessary sustenance. Was it not to teach them deeper feeling for the poor, if ever God again should give them riches? Was it not, by poverty, to try those hearts which had passed so blamelessly through all the ordeals and temptations of wealth, in order that they worthily might wear the double crown given only to such as remain unhardened by prosperity, unembittered by adversity? Was it not to discipline our warm Maria's love, and to chasten her Henry's very gentlemanly pride into the due Christian proportions—self-respect with self-humiliation? Was it not, chiefest and best, to school their hearts for heaven, and, by feeding them on miseries and wrongs a little while, to fix their affections on things above rather than on things of this world?

Yes: Providence has many ends in view, and they all tend consistently to one great focus—the ultimate advantage of the good by means of the confusion of the wicked.

Meanwhile came trouble on apace. Henry Clements justly felt aggrieved, insulted; and the sentiment of pride, improper only from excess, determined him to make no more advances: all that man could do, that is, which a gentleman ought to do, he had done; but letters and visits proved equally unavailing. He had come to the resolution that he would make no more efforts himself, nor scarcely let Maria make any. As for her, poor soul! she was now in grievous tribulation, with sad, sufficient reason for it too; seeing that, in addition to her father's anger, still protracted—in addition to that vile forgery imputed to her craft, and whereof she had been made the guilty victim—in addition to their own soon pressing money-wants, and that heartless fraud of John's against her husband's little all (though she counted of it only as a luckless speculation),—she had just become acquainted, through the public prints, of her dear good mother's death, even before she had heard of any illness. What bitter pangs were there for her, poor child! That she should have lost that mother just then, without forgiveness, without blessing,—whilst all was unexplained, and their whole conduct of affections without guile, wore the hideous mask of base, undutiful contrivance! Cheer up, Maria, cheer up! only in this bad world can innocence be sullied with a doubt: cheer up! the spirit of that mother whom you loved on earth knows it well already; learned it while she yet was leaving the body of her death: cheer up! she is still near you both—dear children of affliction and affection! and God has commissioned her for good to be your ministering angel.

With reference to means of living, they appeared limited at once to a little ready money, and a few personal chattels and trinkets; without so much as one pound of capital to back the young housekeepers, or a shilling's-worth of interest or dividend or earnings coming in for weekly-bills. Clements had been utterly confounded in all his economical arrangements by that sudden bitter breach of trust; and, albeit (as we have hinted), his aim in marriage was not money; still, without much of worldly calculation, he might prudently have looked for some

provision on Maria's part at least equal to his own: in fact, the fond young couple had reasonably set their hearts upon that golden mean—four hundred a year to begin with. Now, however, by two fell swoops—brother John's dishonesty and Sir Thomas's resolve of disinheritance—all this rational and moderate expectation had been dashed to atoms; and the cottage of contented competence appeared but as a castle in the clouds—a mere airy matter of undiluted moonshine. Thus, when that happiest of honeymoons had dwindled down the hundred-pound bank-note (shrewd John's well-expended bait) to the fractional part of a ten, and our newly-married pair came to put together their united resources, wherewithal to travel through the world, they could muster but very little:—considering, too, the future, and the promise of an early increase to provide for, forty-seven pounds was not quite a fortune; and a few articles of jewellery did not much increase it.

We need not imagine that Henry calmly acquiesced without a struggle in the roguish fraud which had impoverished him; but, notwithstanding all his best endeavors, he found, to his dismay, that the case was irremediable: the transfer-books, indeed, were evidence; and equity would give credit for the trust: but that the "Independent Bank" had failed was a simple fact; and so long as John stood ready to swear he had invested in it, there was an end to the business. Be sure, shrewd Jack was not likely to leave anything dubious or unsatisfactory in the affair. Austral papers were easily got at now, cheap as whitey-brown; and for any help the law could give him, poor Henry Clements might as well engage the wind-raising services of a Lapland witch.

He must put his shoulder to the wheel without delay; manifestly, his profession of the law, however unlucrative till now, must be the mighty lever that should raise him quickly to the summit of opulence and fame: and he vigorously set to work, as the briefless are forced to do, inditing a new law-book, which should lift him high in honor with those magnates on the Bench; being, as he was, a court-counsel, not a chamber one, an eloquent pleader too (if the world would only give him a hearing), he unluckily took for his thesis the questionable "Doctrine of Defence;" combating magnanimously on the loftiest moral grounds

all manner of received opinions, time-honored fictions, legitimated quibbles, and other things which (as he was pleased to put it) "render the majesty of the law ridiculous to the ears of common sense, and iniquitous in the sight of Christian judgment." Rash youth! forensic Quixote! better had you plodded on, without this extra industry and skill, in the hopeless idleness and solitude of your Temple garret—better had you burnt your wig and gown outright, with all the airy briefs to come that fluttered round them, than have owned yourself the author of that heretical piece of moral mawkishness—"The Doctrine of Defence, by Henry Clements."

He had with difficulty found a publisher,—a chilling incident enough in itself, considering an author's feelings for his book-child; and when found, the scarcely satisfactory arrangement was insisted on, of mutual participation in profit and loss: in other parlance, the bookseller pocketing the first, and the author unpocketing the second. Thus it came to pass, that after three months' toil and enormous collation of cases—after extravagant indulgence of the most ardent hopes, glory, good, and gold, consequent instantaneously on this happy publication—after reasonably expecting that judges would quote it in their ermine, and serjeants consult it in their silk—that London would be startled by the event from the humdrum of its ordinary routine—and the wondering world applaud the name of Henry Clements,—O heart-sickening reality! what was the result of his exertions?

"So, that puppy Clements has taken upon himself to put us all to school about whom we may defend, and how, I see,—— Hang the fellow's impudence!" grunted a fat Old Bailey counsel to his peers, well aware that the luckless author sat nervously within earshot.

"I know whose junior that modest swain shall never be," simpered Serjeant Tiffin.

"The fellow's done for himself," was the simultaneous verdict of a well-wigged band of brothers. And what else they might have added in their charity poor Clements never knew, for he crept away to his garret stricken with disappointment. There he must encounter other trials of the heart: two or three reviews and newspapers lay upon his table, just sent in by the bookseller,

as per order; for they contained, in spirit-stirring print, notices of "Clements on Defence." Unluckily for his present peace of mind, poor fellow, the periodicals in question were none of the humaner sort; no kindly encouraging "Literary Register," no soft-spoken "Courtier," no patient "Investigator," no generously-indulgent "Critical Gazette:" these more amiable journals would be slower in the field,—some six weeks hence, perhaps, creeping on with philanthropic sloth: but fiercer prints, which dart hebdomadal wrath at every trembling seeker of their parsimonious praise, had whipt up their malice to deliver the first swift blow against our hapless neophyte in print. Thus, when with a nervous preboding Henry took up the "Watchman," in eager hope for favor to his poor dear book, he turned quite sick at heart to find the lying verdict run as follows, though the small type in which it spake was a comfort too:—

"A careless compilation of insignificant cases, clumsily thrown together, and calculated to set its author high indeed upon the rolls of fame; proving to the world that a Mr. Henry Clements can reason very feebly; that his premises are habitually false; and that presumptuous preaching is the natural accompaniment of extreme ignorance."

By all that worries man, but this was too bad: "careless?"—every word had been a care to him: "clumsy?"—in composition it was Addison's own self: "feeble?"—if he was good for anything, he was good for logic: "false?"—not one premise but stood on adamant, not one conclusion but it was fixed as fate: "presumptuous?"—it was bold and masculine, certainly, but humble too; here and there almost deferential: "ignorant?"—ye powers that live in looks, testify by thousands how Clements had been studying!—And yet this most lying sentence, a congeries or sorites of untruths, hastily penned by some dyspeptic scribe who perhaps had barely dipped into the book, was at the moment circulating in every library of the kingdom, proclaiming our poor barrister a fool!

O thou watchful scribe, forbear! for it is cowardly—they cannot smite again: forbear! for it is cruel—the hearts of wife and mother and lover ache upon your idle words: forbear! it is unreasonable—for oftentimes a word would prove that Rhadamanthus'

self is wrong: forbear, calumnious scribe! and heed the harms you do, when you rob some poor struggler of his character for sense, and make the bread of the hungry to fail.

"The Corinthian," another snarling watchdog in the courts of the temple of Fame, followed instinctively the same injurious wake: it was a leisurely sarcastic anatomization, quite enough to blight any young candidate's prospects, supposing that mankind respected such a verdict; if not to make him cut his throat, granting that the victim should be sensitive as Keats. The generous review in question may be judged of by its first line and last sentence; as Hercules from his advancing foot, or Cuvier's Megatherium from the relics of its great toe. Thus it commenced:—

"When a disappointed man, intolerant of fortune," &c., &c., and it wound up many stinging observations with this grateful climax following:—

"We trust we have now said enough to prove that if a man will be bold enough to 'depreciate censure,'—will attack what he is pleased to consider abuses, however countenanced by high authority,—and will obtrude his literary eloquence into our solemn courts of law, he deserves—what does he not deserve?—to be addressed henceforth by a name suggestive at once of ignorance, presumption, and conceit, as—Mr. Henry Clements."

Now, will it be believed that a trivial error of the press mainly conduced to occasion this hostility? Our poor author had been weak enough to "deprecate censure" in his pennywise humility, and the printer had negatived his meaning as above: "*hinc illæ lacrymæ.*" Oh, but how the ragged tooth of calumny gnawed his very heart!

"The Legal Recorder" was another of those early unfavorables; being as a matter of course adverse too, and not very disinterestedly either: for it played the exalted part of pet puffer to a rival publisher, who wanted no other reason for condemning this book of Mr. Clements than that it came from the legal officina of an opponent in his trade. There was another paper or two, but Clements felt so utterly disheartened that he did not dare to look at them. I wish he had; they would have comforted him, pouring balm upon his wounded pride by their kind and cordial

praises: but ill luck ruled the hour, so he burnt them forthwith, and lost much literary comforting.

To sauce up all this pleasantry with a smack of concreted pleasure itself, the last and only remaining document on the table was a civil note from Mr. Wormwood, publisher and bookseller, enclosing the following items with his compliments:

	£	s
To 500 copies "Doctrine of Defence" - -	124	3
To advertising ditto - - - - - -	25	0
To 10 per. cent. on sales - - - - -	&c.	
Supplied to author, 12 copies - - - -	&c.	
Given to periodicals for review, 15 copies - -	&c.	

Against all which was the solitary offset of "three copies sold;" leaving as our Henry's *share* of now certain loss a matter of £80: which, between ourselves, was only a very little more than the whole cost of that untoward publication. Mr. Wormwood hoped to hear from Mr. Clements at his earliest convenience, as a certain sum was to be made up on a certain day, and the book-trade never had been at a lower ebb, and prompt payment would be esteemed a great accommodation, and—all that stereotyped sort of thing.

Poor Clements,—reviled author, ruined lawyer, almost reckless wight,—here was an extinguisher, indeed, to the morning's brilliant hopes! What an overwhelming debt to that ill-used couple in their altered circumstances! How entirely by his own strong effort had he swamped his legal expectations! Just as a man who cannot swim splashes himself into certain suffocation; whereas, if he would but lie quite still, he was certain to have floated on as safe as cork.

Well: to cut a long story short, our unlucky author found that he must pay, and pay forthwith, or incur a lawyer's bill for his debt to Mr. Wormwood: so he gave up his Temple garret, sold his books, nicknacks, and superfluous habiliments, added to the proceeds their forty pounds of capital, and a neck-chain of Maria's; and, at tremendous sacrifices, found himself once more out of danger, because out of debt. But it was a bad prospect truly for the future, ay, and for the present too; a few pounds left would soon be gone,—and then dear Maria's confinement

was approaching, and a hundred wants and needs, little and great: accordingly, they made all haste to get rid of their suburban dwelling in the City Road, collected their few valuables remaining, and retreated with all economical speed to a humble lodging in a cheap back street at Islington.

That little parlor was a palace of love: in the midst of her deep sorrow, sweet Maria never failed of her amiable charities—nay, she was even cheerful, hopeful—happy, and rendering happy: a thousand times a day had Henry cause to bless his "wedded angel." And, showing his love by more than words, he resolutely set about another literary enterprise, anonymous this time for very fear's sake; but Providence saw fit to bless his efforts with success. He wrote a tragedy, a clever and good one too; though "The Watchman" did sneer about "modern Shakspeares," and "The Corinthian," pouncing on some trifling fault, pounded it with would-be giant force: nevertheless, for it was a famous English theme, he luckily got them to accept it at the Haymarket, and "Boadicea" drew full houses; so the author had his due ninth night, and pocketed, instead of fame (for he grimly kept his secret) enough to enable him to print his tragedy for private satisfaction; and that piece of vanity accomplished, he still found himself seven pounds beforehand with the world.

CHAPTER XI.

Fraud cuts his fingers with his own edged tools.

UNPLEASANT as it is to feel obliged to be the usher of ill company, I must now introduce to the fastidious public a brace of characters anything but reputable. It were possible indeed to slur them over with a word; but I have deeper ends in view for a glance so superficial: we may learn a lesson in charity, we may gain some schooling of the heart, even from those "ladies-legatees."

Do you remember them, the supposititious nieces, aiders and abetters in our stock-jobber's forged will? Two flashy, showy women, *not* of easy virtue, but of none at all—special intimates of John Dillaway, and the genus of his like, and habitual frequenters of divers choice and pleasant places of resort.

The reason of their introduction here is two-fold: first, they have to play a part in our tale,—a part of righteous retribution; and, secondly, they have to instruct us incidentally in this lesson of true morals and human charity,—dread, denounce, and hate the sin, but feel a just compassion for the sinner. Let us take the latter object first, and bear with the brief epitome of facts which have blighted those unfortunates to what they are.

Look at these two women, impudent brawlers, foul with vice: can there be any excuses made for them, considered as distinct from their condition? God knoweth: listen to their histories; and fear not that thy virtuous glance will be harmed or misdirected, or a minute of thy precious time ill spent.

Anna Bates and Julia Manners (their latest *noms de guerre* will serve all nominative purposes as well as any other) had arrived at the same lowest level of female degradation by very different downward roads. Anna's father had been a country curate, unfortunate through life because utterly imprudent, and neither too wise a man nor too good a one, or depend upon it his orphan could not have come to this: "Never saw I the

righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread." But the father died carelessly as he had lived—in debt, with all his little affairs at sixes and sevens; and his widow with her budding daughter, saving almost nothing from the wreck, set up for milliners at Hull. Then did the mother pique herself upon playing her cards cleverly; for gallant Captain Croker was quite smitten with the girl. Poor child,—she loved, listened, and was lost; a more systematic traitor of affection never breathed than that fine man; so she left by night her soft intriguing broken-spirited mother, followed her Lothario from barrack to barrack, and at last—he flung her away! Who can wonder at the reckless and dissolute result? Whom had she to care for her,—whom had she to love? She must live thus, or starve. Without credit, character, or hope, or help, the friendless unprotected wretch was thrown upon the town. When the last accounts are opened, oblivious General Croker will find an ell-long score of crimes laid to his charge, whereof he little reckons in his sear and yellow leaf. The trusting victim of seduction has a legion of excuses for the wretched one she is.

Again; for another case, whereon the better-favored heart may ruminate in charity. Miss Julia Manners had a totally different experience; but man can little judge how mainly the iron hand of circumstance confined that life-long sinner to the ways and works of guilt. In the nervous language of the Bible—(hear it, men and women, without shrinking from the words)—that poor girl was "the seed of the adulterer and the whore:" born in a brothel, amongst outcasts from the better mass of life—brought up from the very cradle amid sounds and scenes of utter vice (whereof we dare not think or speak one moment of the many years she dwelt continuously among them)—educated solely as a profligate, and ignorant alike of sin, righteousness, and a judgment to come—had she then a chance of good, or one hopeful thought of being better than she was? The water of holy baptism never bedewed that brow; the voice of motherly counsel never touched those ears; her eyes were unskilled to read the records of wisdom; her feet untutored to follow after holiness; her heart unconscious of those evils which she never knew condemned; her soul—she never heard or thought of one! Oh, ye well-born, well-bred, ye kindly,

carefully, prayerfully instructed daughters of innocence and purity, pause, pause, ere your charity condemns: hate the sin, but love the sinner: think it out further, for yourselves, in all those details which I have not time to touch, skill to describe, nor courage to encounter; think out as kindly as ye may this episode of just indulgence; there is wisdom in this lesson of benevolence, and after-sweetness too, though the earliest taste of it be bitter; think it out; be humbler of your virtue, scarcely competent to err; be more grateful to that Providence, which hath filled your lot with good; and be gentler-hearted, more generous-handed unto those, whose daily life is—all temptation.

Now, these two ladies (who extenuates their guilt, caviller? who breathes one iota of excuse for their wicked manner of life? who does not utterly denounce the foul and flagrant sin, whilst he leaves to a secret-searching God the judgment of the sinner?)—these two ladies, I say, had of late become very sore plagues to Mr. John Dillaway. They had flared out their hush-money like duchesses, till the whole town rang about their equipage and style; and now that all was spent, they pestered our stockjobber for more. They came at an unlucky season, a season of "ill luck"—such a miraculous run of it, as nothing could explain to any rational mind but loaded dice, packed cards, contrivance and conspiracy. Nevertheless, our worthy John went on staking, and betting, and playing, resolute to break the bank, until it was no wonder at all to any but his own shrewd genius, that he found himself one feverish morning well nigh penniless. At such a moment, then, called our ladies-legatees, clamorous for hush-money.

As a matter most imperatively of course, not a farthing more should be forthcoming, and many oaths avouched that stern determination. They ought to be ashamed of themselves, after such an enormous bribe to each—as if shame of any kind had part or lot in those feminine accomplices: it was a sanguine thought of Mr. John Dillaway. But the ladies were not ashamed, nor silenced, nor anything like satisfied. So having thoroughly fatigued themselves with out-swearing and out-threatening our sneerful stockjobber, they resolved upon exposing him, come what might. For their own guilty part in that transaction of Mrs.

Jane Mackenzie's pseudo-will, good sooth, the wretched women had no characters to lose, nor scarcely aught else on which one could set a value. Danger and the trial would be an excitement to their palled spirits, possible transportation even seemed a ray of hope, since anything was better than the town; and in their sinful recklessness, liberty or life itself was little higher looked on than a dicer's stake. Moreover, as to all manner of personal pains and penalties, there was every chance of getting off scot-free, provided they lost no time, went not one before the other, but doubly turned queen's evidence at once against their worthy coadjutor and employer. In the hope, then, of ruining him, if not of getting scathelessly off themselves, these ladies-legatees mustered once more from the mazes of St. Giles's the pack of competent Irish witnesses, collected whatever documentary or other evidence looked likeliest to help their ends, and then one early day presented themselves before the Lord Mayor, eager to destroy at a blow that pleasant Mr. Dillaway.

The proceedings were long, cautious, tedious, and secret: emissaries to Belfast, Doctors' Commons, and the Bank: the Stamp Office was stirred to its foundations; and Canterbury staggered at the fraud. Thus within a week the proper officials were in a condition to prosecute, and the issue of immense examinations tended to that point of satisfaction, the haling Mr. Dillaway to prison on the charge of having forged a will.

CHAPTER XII.

Heart's core.

They were come into great want, poor Henry and Maria: they had not wherewithal for daily sustenance. The few remaining trinkets, books, clothes, and other available moveables had been gradually pledged away, and to their full amount—at least, the pawnbroker said so. That unlucky publication of the Law Book, so speedily condemned and heartlessly ridiculed, had wrecked all Henry's possible prospects in the courts; and as for help from friends—the casual friends of common life—he was too proud to beg for that,—too sensitive, too self-respectful. Relations he had none, or next to none,—that distant cousin of his mother's, the Mac-Something, whom he had never even seen, but who, nevertheless, had acted as his guardian.

Much as he suspected Dillaway in the matter of that bitter breach of trust, he had neither ready money to proceed against him, nor (when he came to think it over) any legal grounds at all to go upon; for, as we have said before, even granting there should be evidence adduced of the transfer of stock from the name of Clements to that of Dillaway, still it was a notorious fact that the "Independent Bank" had failed, whereto the stockbroker could swear he had intrusted it. In short, shrewd Jack had managed all that affair to admiration; and poor Clements was ruined without hope, and defrauded without remedy.

Then, again, we already know how that Lady Dillaway was dead, so help from her was simply impossible; and the miserable father, Sir Thomas, was kept too closely up to the mark of resolute anger by slanderous John, to give them any aid if they applied to him; but, in truth, as to personal application, Henry would not for pride, and Maria now could not, for her near-at-hand motherly condition. Her frequent letters, as we may be sure, were intercepted; and, even if Sir Thomas now and then

yearned after his lost child, it had become a matter of physical impossibility to find out where she lived. Thus were they hopelessly sinking, day by day, into all the bitter waves of want. Not but that Henry strived, as we have seen, and shall yet see: still his endeavors had been very nearly fruitless,—and, perchance, till all available moveables had been pawned outright, very feeble too. Now, however, that Maria, in her sorrow and her need, must soon become a mother, the state of things grew terrible indeed, their horizon was all over black with clouds.

No: not all over. There is light under the darkness, a growing light that shall dispel the darkness; a precious light upon their souls, the early dawn of Heaven's eternal day; God's final end in all their troubles, the reaping-time of joy for their sowing-time of tears.

Without cant, affectation, or hypocrisy, there is but one panacea for the bruised or broken heart, available alike in all times, all places, and all circumstances: and he who knows not what that is, has more to learn than I can teach him. That pure substantial comfort is born of Heaven's hope, and faith in Heaven's wisdom; it is a solid confidence in God's great love, but faintly shadowed out by all the charities of earth. Human affections in their manifold varieties are little other than an echo of that Voice, "Come unto me; Comfort ye, comfort ye; I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and my daughters; thy Maker is thy Husband; he hath loved thee with an everlasting love; when thou goest through the fire, I will be with thee, through the waters, they shall not overflow thee; eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man to conceive the blessings which His love hath laid in store for *thee*."

Heart's-ease in heart's-affliction,—this they found in God; turning to Him with all their hearts, and pouring out their hearts before Him, they trusted in Him heartily for both worlds' good. Therefore did He give them their hearts' desire, satisfying all their mind: therefore did they love each other now with a newly added plenitude of love, mutually in reference to Him, who loved them and gave himself for them: therefore did they feel in

their distresses more gladness at their hearts, than in the days of luxury and affluence, the increase of their oil and their wine.

For this is the great end of all calamities. God doth not willingly afflict: trouble never cometh without an urgent cause; and though man in his perverseness often misses all the prize of purity, whilst he pays all the penalty of pain; still the motive that sent sorrow was the same,—O that there were a better heart in them!

In many modes the heart of man is tried, as gold must be refined by many methods; and happiest is the heart, that, being tried by many, comes purest out of all. If prosperity melts it as a flux, well; but better too than well, if the acid of affliction afterward eats away all unseen impurities; whereas, to those with whom the world is in their hearts, affluence only hardens, and penury embitters, and thus, though burnt in many fires, their hearts are dross in all. Like those sullen children in the market-place, they feel no sympathies with heaven or with earth: unthankful in prosperity, unsoftened by adversity, well may it be said of them, Hearts of stone, hearts of stone!

Not of such were Henry and Maria: naturally warm in affections and generous in sympathies, it needed but the pilot's hand to steer their hearts aright: the energies of life were there, both fresh and full, lacking but direction heavenwards; and chastisement wisely interposed to wean those yearning spirits from the brief and feverish pursuits of unsatisfying life, to the rest and the rewards of an eternity. Then were they wedded indeed, heart answering to heart; then were they strong against all the ills of life, those hearts that were established by grace; then spake they often one to another out of the abundance of their hearts; and in spite of all their sorrows they were happy, for their hearts were right with God.

Let the grand idea suffice, unincumbered by the multitude of details. Whatsoever things are true, honest and just; whatsoever things are pure, lovely, or of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,—believe of those twin hearts that God had given them all. Patience, hope, humility; faith, tenderness, and charity; prayer, trust, benevolence, and joy: this was the lot of the afflicted! It was good for them that they

had been in trouble; for they had gained from it a wealth that is above the preciousness of rubies, deservedly dearer to their hearts than the thousands of gold and silver.

What a contrast then was shown between God's kindness and man's coldness! No one of their fellows seemed to give them any heed; but He cared for them, and on Him they cast their cares. Former friends appeared to stand aloof, self-dependent and unsympathizing; but God was ever near, kindly bringing help in every extremity, which always seemed at hand, yet ever kept away; smoothing the pillow of sickness, comforting the troubled spirit, and treading down calamity and calumny and care; as a conqueror conquering for them. So, they learned the priceless wisdom which adversity would teach to all on whom she frowneth; when earthly hopes are wrecked, to anchor fast on God; and if affluence should ever come again, to aid the poor afflicted with heartiness, beneficence, and home-taught sympathy.

CHAPTER XIII.

Hope's Birth to Innocence, and Hope's Death to Fraud.

JOHN DILLAWAY's sudden loss of property, his character exploded as a monied man, and the strong probability of his turning out a felon, had a great effect on the spirits of Sir Thomas. He had called upon his promising son in prison, had found him very sulky, disinclined for social intercourse, and anything but filial; all he condescended to growl, with a characteristic d—— or two interlarding his eloquence, was this taunting speech:—

"Well, governor, I may thank you and your counsels for this. Here 's a precious end to all my clever tricks of trade! I wish you joy of your son, and of your daughter too, old man. Who wrote that letter? What, not found out yet? and does she still starve for it? Who gained money as you bade him,—never mind how? And is now going to do honor to the family all round the world, ey?—Ha, ha, ha!"

The poor unhappy father tottered away as quickly as he could, while yet the brutal laughter of that unnatural son rang upon his ears. He was quite miserable, let him turn which way he would. On 'Change the name had been disgraced,—posted up for scorn on the board of degradation; at home there was no pliant son and heir, to testify against Maria, and to close the many portals of a wretched father's heart. He grew very wretched—very mopy; determined upon cutting adrift shrewd Jack himself, as a stigma on the name which had once held the mace of mayoralty; made his will petulantly, for good and all, in favor of Stationers' Hall, and felt very like a man who had lived in vain. "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the earth?"

Meanwhile, in those two opposite quarters of the world of London, Newgate, and Islington, Sir Thomas's two discarded children were bearing in a different way their different privations. Poor Maria's hour of peril had arrived; and amidst all those pains,

dangers, and necessities, a soft and smiling babe was born into the world; gladness filled their hearts and praise was on their tongues, when the happy father and mother kissed that first-born son. It was a splendid boy, they said, and should redeem his father's fortunes: there was hope in the future, let the past be what it may; and this new bond of union to that happy wedded pair made the present—one unclouded scene of gratitude and love. Who shall sing of the humble ale-caudle, and those cheerful givings to surrounding poor, scarcely poorer than themselves? Who shall record how kind was Henry, how useful was the nurse, how liberal the doctor, how sympathizing all? Who shall tell how tenderly did Providence step in with another author's night of that same tragedy, and how other avenues to literary gain stood wide open to industry and genius? It was happiness all, happiness and triumph: they were weathering the storm famously, and had safely passed the breakers of False-witness.

Amidst the other part of London sate a sullen fellow, quite alone, in Newgate, looking for his trial on the morrow, and prophesying accurately enough how some two days hence, he, John Dillaway, of Broker's Alley, son and heir of the richest stationer in Europe, was to appear in the character of a convicted felon, and be probably condemned to transportation for life. A pleasant retrospect was his, a pleasanter aspect, and a pleasanter prospect; all was pleasure assuredly.

And the morrow duly came; with those implacable approvers, those accurate Irish witnesses, those tell-tale documents, that prosecuting crown and bank, that dogged jury, and that sentencing recorder: so then, by a little after noon, to the scandal of Finsbury Square, John Dillaway discovered that the "wise man's trick or two in the money market" was about to be rewarded with twenty-one years of transportation.

Of this interesting fact Henry Clements became acquainted by an occasional peep into the public prints; and he perceived to his astonishment, that the defrauded Mrs. Jane Mackenzie, of Ballyriggan, near Belfast, could surely be none other than his mother's Ulster cousin, the nominal guardian of his boyhood! To be sure, it mattered little enough to him, for the old lady had never been much better than a stranger to him, and at present appeared

only in that useless character to an expectant, a person despoiled of her money; nevertheless, of that identical money, certain sanguine friends had heretofore given him expectations in the event of her death, seeing that she had nobody to leave it to, except himself and the public charities of the United Kingdom: clearly, this cousin must have been the defrauded bank annuitant, and he could not help feeling more desolate than ever; for John Dillaway's evil influences had robbed him now of name, fame, fortune, and what hope regards as much as any—expectations. Yet,—must not the Bank of England bear the brunt of all this forgery, and account for its stock to that innocent depositor? Old Mrs. Jane was sinking into dotage, probably had plenty of other money, and scarcely seemed to stir about the business; therefore, legitimately interested as Henry indubitably was, he took upon him to write to his antiquated relative, and in so doing managed to please her mightily: renewed whatever interest she ever might have felt in him, enabled her to enforce her just claim, and really stood a likelier chance than ever of coming in for competency some day. However, for the present, all was penury still. Clements had been too delicate for even a hint at his deplorable condition: and his distant relative's good feeling, so providentially renewed, served indeed to gild the future, but did not avail to gingerbread the present. So they struggled on as well as they could: both very thankful for the chance which had caused a coalition between sensitiveness and interest; and Maria at least more anxious than ever for a reconciliation with her father, now that all his ardent hopes had been exploded in son John.

CHAPTER XIV.

Probable Reconciliation.

It was no use—none at all. Nature was too strong for him; and a higher force than even potent Nature. In vain Sir Thomas pish'd, and tush'd, and bah'd; in vain he buried himself chin-deep amongst the century of ledgers that testified of gainful years gone by, and were now mustily rotting away in the stagnant air of St. Benet's Sherehog: interest had lost its interest for him, profits profited not, speculation's self had dull, lack-lustre eyes, and all the hard realities of utilitarian life were become weary, flat, and stale. Sir Thomas was a miserable man—a bereaved old man—who nevertheless clung to what was left, and struggled not to grieve for what was lost: there was a terrible strife going on secretly within him, dragging him this way and that: a little lightning flash of good had been darted by Omnipotence right through the stone-built caverns of his heart, and was smouldering a concentred flame within its innermost hollow; a small soft-skinned seed had been dropped by the Father of Spirits into that iron-bound soil, and it was swelling day by day under the case-hardened surface, gradually with gentle violence: despite of all the locks and gates, and bolts and bars, a silent enemy had somehow crept within the fortress of his feelings, ready at any unguarded moment to fling the portals open. The rock had a sealed fountain leaping within it, as an infant in the womb. The poor old man, the worldly cold old man, was giving way.

Happy misery! for his breaking heart revealed a glorious jewel at the core: Oh, sorrow beyond price! for natural affections bursting up amid these unsunned snows, were a hot-spring to that Iceland soul. Oh, bitter, bitter penitence most blest! which broke down the money-proud man, which bruised and kneaded him, humbled, smote, and softened him, and made him come again

a little child,—a loving, yearning, little child,—a child with pity in its eyes, with prayer upon its tongue, with generous affection in its heart. "Oh, Maria! precious, cast-off child, where art thou, where art thou, where art thou,—starving? And canst thou, blessed God, forgive? And will not thy great mercy bring her to me yet again? Oh what a treasury of love have I misspent; what riches of the Heart, what only truest wealth, have I, poor prodigal, been squandering! Unhappy son,—unhappy father of the perjured, heartless, miserable John! Wo is me! Where art thou, dear child, my pure and best Maria?"

We may well guess, far too well, how it was that dear Maria came not near him. She had been, prior to confinement, very, very ill: nigh to death: the pangs of travail threatened to have seized upon her all too soon, when wasted with sorrow, and weakened by want. She lay long weeks, battling for life, in her little back parlor, at Islington, tended night and day by her kind, good husband.

But did she not often (you will say) urge him, earnestly as the dying ask, to seek out her father or brother (she had not been told of his conviction), and to let them know this need? Why, then, did he so often put her off with faint excuses, and calm her with coming hopes, and do anything, say anything, suffer anything rather than execute the fervent wish of the affectionate Maria? It is easily understood. With, and notwithstanding, all the high sentiments, strong sense, and warm feelings of Henry Clements, he was too proud to seek any succor of the Dillaways. Sooner than give that hard old man, or, beforetime, that keen malicious young one, any occasion to triumph over his necessitous condition, he himself would starve; ay, and trust to Heaven his darling wife and child; but not trust these to them. Never, never—if the heart-divorcing workhouse were their doom—should that father or that brother hear from him a word of supplication, or one murmur of complaint. Nay; he took pains to hinder their knowledge of this trouble: all the world rather than those two men. Let penury, disease, the very parish-beadle triumph over him, but not those two. It was a natural feeling for a sensitive mind like his—but in many respects a wrong one. It was to put away, deliberately, the helping hand of Providence, because

it bade him kiss the rod. It was a direct preference of honor to humility. It was an unconsciously unkind consideration of himself before those whom he nevertheless believed and called more dear to him than life,—but not than honor. Therefore it was that the handbills he had so often seen pasted upon walls were disregarded, that the numerous newspaper advertisements remained unanswered, and that all the efforts of an almost frantic father to find his long-lost daughter were in vain.

Meanwhile, to be just upon poor Clements, who really fancied he was doing right in this, he left no stone unturned to obtain a provision for his beloved wife and child. Frequently, by letters (as little urgent as affection and necessity would suffer him), he had pressed upon some powerful friends for that vague phantom of a gentlemanly livelihood,—" something under Government;" a hope improbable of accomplishment, indefinite as to view, but still a hope: especially, since very civil answers came to his request, couched in terms of official guardedness. He had called anxiously upon "old friends," in pretty much of his usual elegant dress (for he was wise enough, or proud enough, never to let his poverty be seen in his attire), and they made many polite inquiries after "Mrs. Clements," and "Where are you living?" and "How is it you never come our way?" and "Clements has cut us all dead," and so forth. It was really entirely his own fault, but he never could contrive to tell the truth: and when one day, in a careless tone of voice, he threw out something about "Do you happen to have ten pounds about you?" to a dashing young blood of his acquaintance,—the dashing young blood affected to treat it as a joke,—"You married men, lucky dogs, with your regular establishments, are too hard upon us poor bachelors, who have nothing but Clubs to go to. I give you my honor, Clements, ten pounds would dine me for a fortnight:—spare me this time, there's a fine fellow: take the trouble to write a cheque on your bankers,—here's paper,—and my tiger shall get it cashed for you while you wait: we poor bachelors are never flush." But Clements had already owned it was a mere "*obiter dictum*,"—nothing but a joke of prudent marriage against extravagant bachelorship.

Ah, what a bitter joke was that! On the verge of that yes or no, to be uttered by his frank young friend, trembled reluctant

honor; home-affections were imploring in that careless tone of voice; hunger put that off-hand question. It was vain; a cruel killing effort for his pride: so Henry Clements never asked again; withdrew himself from friends; grew hopeless, all but reckless; and his only means of living were picked up scantily from the by-ways of literature. An occasional guinea from a magazine, a copy of that luckily anonymous tragedy now and then sold by him from house to house (he always disguised himself at such times), a little indexing to be done for publishers, and a little correcting of the press for printers,—these formed the trifling and uncertain pittance upon which the pale family existed. Poor Henry Clements, proud Henry Clements, you had, indeed, a dose of physic for your pride: bitter draughts, bitter draughts, day after day; but, for all that weak and wasted wife, dearly, devotedly beloved; for all the pining infant, with its angel's face and beautiful smiles; for all the strong pleadings of affection, yea, and gnawing hunger too, the strong man's pride was stronger. And had not God's good providence proved mercifully strongest of them all, that family of love would have starved outright for pride.

But Heaven's favor willed it otherwise. By something little short of miracle, where food was scant and medicine scarce, the poor emaciated mother gradually gained strength,—that long, low fever left her, health came again upon her cheek, her travail passed over prosperously, the baby too thrived (oh, more than health to mothers!), and Maria Clements found herself one morning strong enough to execute a purpose she had long most anxiously designed. "Henry was wrong to think so harshly of her father. She knew he would not spurn her away: he must be kind, for she loved him dearly still. Wicked as it doubtless was of her [dear innocent girl] to have done anything contrary to his wishes, she was sure he would relieve her in her utmost need. He could not, could not be so hard as poor dear Henry made him." So, taking advantage of her husband's absence during one of his literary pilgrimages, she took her long-forgotten bonnet and shawl, and, with the baby in her arms, flew on the wings of love, duty, penitence, and affection, to her dear old home in Finsbury Square.

CHAPTER XV.

The Father finds his Heart for ever.

He had been at death's door, sinking out of life, because he had nothing now to live for. He still was very weak in bed, faint, and worn, and white, propped up with pillows,—that poor, bereaved old man. Ever since Lady Dillaway's most quiet death he had felt alone in the world. True, while she lived she had seemed to him a mere tranquil trouble, a useless complacent piece of furniture, often in his way; but now that she was dead, what a void was left where she had been—mere empty space, cold and deathlike. She had left him quite alone.

Then again,—of John, poor John, he would think, and think continually—not about the little vulgar pock-marked man of 'change, the broker, the rogue, the coward,—but of a happy curly child, with sparkling eyes,—a merry-hearted, ruddy little fellow, romping with his sister—aye, in this very room; here is the identical China vase he broke, all riveted up; there is the corner where he would persist to nestle his dormice. Ah, dear child! precious child!—where is he, what is he now? Where and what indeed; alas, poor father! had you known what I do, and shall soon inform the world, of that bad man's awful end, one more, one fiercest pang would have tormented you: but Heaven spared that pang. Nevertheless, the bitter contrast of the child and of the man had made him very wretched,—and to the widower's solitude added the father's sadness.

And worst of all,—Maria's utter loss—that dear, warm-hearted, innocent, ill-used, and yet beloved daughter. Why did he spurn her away? and keep her away so long?—oh, hard heart, hard heart! Was she not innocent after all? and John, bad John, too probably the forger of that letter, as the forger of this will? And now that he should give his life to see her, and kiss her, and—no, no, not forgive her, but pray to be forgiven by her,—" Where is

she ; why doesn't she come to hold up my poor weak head,—to see how fervently my dead old heart has at last learnt to love,—to help a bad, and hard, a pardoned and penitent old man to die in perfect peace,—to pray with me, for me, to God, our God, my daughter! Where is she,—how can I find her out,—why will she not come to me all this sorrowful year? Oh come, come, dear child,—our Father send thee to me,—come and bless me ere I die,—come, my Maria!"

Magical, or contrived, as it may seem to us, the poor old man was actually bemoaning himself thus, when our dear heroine of the Heart faintly knocked at her old home door. It opened; a faded-looking woman, with a baby in her arms, rushed past the astonished butler: and, just as her father was praying out aloud for Heaven to speed her to him, that daughter's step was at the bed-room door.

Before she turned the handle (some house-maid had recognized her on the stairs, and told her, with an impudent air, that "Sir Thomas was ill abed"), she stopped one calming instant to gain strength of God for that dreaded interview, and to check herself from bursting in upon the chamber of sickness, so as to disquiet that dear weak patient. So, she prayed, gently turned the handle, and heard those thrilling words—Come, my Maria!

It was enough; their hearts burst out together like twin fountains, rolling their joyful sorrows together towards the sea of endless love, as a swollen river that has broken through some envious and constraining dam! It was enough; they wept together, rejoiced together, kissed and clasped each other in the fervor of full love: the babe lay smiling and playing on the bed: Maria, in a torrent of happiest tears, fondled that poor old man, who was crying and laughing by turns, as little children do, was praising God out loud like a saint, and calling down blessings on his daughter's head in all the transports of a new-found Heart. What a world of things they had to tell of,—how much to explain, excuse, forgive and be forgiven, especially about that wicked letter,—how fervently to make up now for love that long lay dormant,—how heartily to bless each other, and to bless again! Who can record it all? Who can even sketch aright the heavenly hues that shone about that scene of the affections? Alas, my

pen is powerless,—yea, no mortal hand can trace those heavenly hues. Angels, that are round the penitent's, the good man's bed, —ye alone who witness it, can utter what ye see: ye alone, rejoicingly with those rejoicing, gladly speed aloft frequent ambassadors to Him the Lord of Love, with some new beauteous trait, some rare ecstatic thought, some pure delighted look, some more burning prayer, some gem of heaven's jewellery more brilliant than the rest, which raises happy envy of your bright compeers. I see your shining bands crowding enamored round that scene of human tenderness; while now and then some Perilike seraph of your thronging spiritual forms will gladly wing away to find favor of his God for a tear, or a prayer, or a holy thought dropped by his ministering hands into the treasury of Heaven.

But the cup of joy is large and deep: it is an ocean in capacity: and mantling though it seemeth to the brim, God's bounty poureth on.

Another step is on the stairs! You have guessed it, Henry Clements. Returned home wearily, after a disheartening expedition, and finding his wife, to his great surprise, gone out, sick and weak, as still he thought her, he had calculated justly on the direction whereunto her heart had carried her; he had followed her speedily, and, with many self-compunctions, he had determined to be proud no more, and to help with all his heart, in that holy reconciliation. See! at the bedside, folding Maria with one arm, and, with his other hand tightly clasped in both of that kind and changed old man's, stands Henry Clements.

Aye, changed indeed: who could have discovered in that joy-illumined brow, in those blessing-dropping lips, in those eyes full of penitence, and pity, and peace, and praise, and prayer, the harsh old usurer—the crafty money-cankered knave of dim St. Benet's Sherehog—the cold husband—the cruel father—the man without a heart? Aye, changed—changed for ever now, an ever of increasing happiness and love. Who or what had caused this deep and mighty change? Natural affection was the sword, and God's the arm that wielded it. None but he could smite so deeply; and when he smote, pour balm into the wound: none but He could kill death, that dead dried heart, and quicken life within its mummied caverns: none but the Voice, which said

"Let there be Light," could work this common miracle of "Let there be Love."

He grew feebler, feebler, that dying kind old man: it had been too much for him, doubtlessly; he had long been ill, and should long ago have died; but that he had lived for this; and now the end seemed near. They never left his bedside then for days and nights, that new-found son and daughter: physicians came, and recommended that the knight be quite alone, quite undisturbed; but Sir Thomas would not, could not—it were cruelty to force it; so he lay feebly on his back, holding on either side the hands of Henry and Maria.

It was not so very long: they had come almost in the nick of time: a few days and hours at the most, and all will then be over. So did they watch and pray.

And the old man faintly whispered:—

"Henry, son Henry;—poor John, forgive him, as you and our God have now forgiven me; poor John,—when he comes back again from those long years of slavery, give him a home, son, give him a home, and enough to keep him honest: tell him I love him, and forgive him; and remind him that I died, praying Heaven for my poor boy's soul.

"Henry and Maria,—I had, since my great distresses, well nigh forgotten this world's wealth; but now, thank God, I have thought of it all for your sakes: in my worst estate of mind, I made a wicked will. It is in that drawer,—quick, give it me.

"Thanks,—thanks,—there is time to tear it; and these good friends, Dr. Jones and Mr. Blair, take witness,—I destroy this wicked will; and my only child, Maria, has my wealth in course of law. Wealth, yes,—if well used, let us call it wealth; for riches may indeed be made a mine of good, and joy, and righteousness. I am unworthy to use any of it well, unworthy of the work, unworthy of the reward: use it well, my holier children, wisely, liberally, kindly: God give you to do great good with it; God give you to feel great happiness in all your doing good. My hands, that saved and scraped it all, also oftentimes by evil hardness, now penitently washed in the Fountain of Salvation, heartily renounce that evil. Be ye my stewards; give liberally to many needy. Oh me, my sin!—children, to my misery you know

what need is: I say no more, I can say no more; poor sinful man, how dare I preach to others? Children, dearest ones, I am a father still; and I would bless you—bless you!

"I grow weak, but my heart seems within me to grow stronger, —I go,—I go, to the Home of Heart, where he that sits upon the throne is Love, and where all the pulses of all the beings there thrill in unison with Him, the Great Heart of Heaven! I, even I, am one of the redeemed,—my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise: I, even I, the hardest and the worst, forgiven, accepted! Who are ye, bright messengers about my bed, heralds of glory? I go, I go,—one, one more, Maria,—one last kiss; we meet—again—in heaven!"

Had he fainted?—yes,—his countenance looked lustrous, yet diminishing in glory even as a setting sun; the living smile faded gradually away, and a tranquil cold calm crept over his cheeks: the angelic light, which made his eyes so beautiful to look at, was going out, going out: all was peace, peace, deep peace.

O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting?

CHAPTER XVI.

A word about Originality and Mourning.

WHEN a purely inventive genius concocts a fabulous tale, it is clearly competent to him so to order matters that characters shall not die off till his book is shortly coming to an end: and had your obedient servant now been engaged in the architecture of a duly conventional story, arranged in pattern style with climax in the middle and a brace of ups and downs to play supporters, doubtless he might easily have kept alive both father and mother to witness the triumph of innocence, and have produced their deaths at the last as a kind of "sweet sorrow," or honied sting, wherewithal to point his moral. Such, however, was not my authorship's intention; and seeing that a wilful pen must have its way, I have chosen to construct my own veracious tale, respecting the incidents of life and death, much as such events not unfrequently occur, that is, at an inconvenient season: for, though such accessories to the fact of dying, as triumphant conversion, or a tranquil going out, may appear to be a little out of the common way, still the circumstance of death itself often in real life seems to come as out of time, as your wisdom thinks the case in the present book of Heart. People will die untowardly, and people will live provokingly, notwithstanding all that novelists have said and poets sung to the contrary: and if two characters out of our principal five have already left the mimic scene, it will now be my duty only to show, as nature and society do, how, of those three surviving chief dramatis personæ, two of them, to wit, our hero and heroine of Heart, gathered many friends about their happy homestead, did a world of good, and, in fine, furnish our volume with a suitable counterpoise to the mass of selfish sin, which (at its height in the only remaining character) it has been my fortune to record and to condemn as the opposite topic of heartlessness.

If writers will be bound by classic rules, and walk on certain

roads because other folks have gone that way before them, needs must that ill-starred originality perish from this world's surface, and find refuge (if it can) in the gentle moon or Sirius. Therefore, let us boldly trespass from the trodden paths, let us rather shake off the shackles of custom than hug them as an ornament approved; and, notwithstanding both parental deaths, seemingly ill-timed for the happiness of innocence, let us acquiesce in the facts, as plain matters of history, not dubious thoughts of fiction; and let us gather to the end any good we can, either from the miserable solitude of a selfish Dillaway, or from the hearty social circle of our happy married pair.

Need I, sons and daughters, need I record at any length how Maria mourned for her father? If you now have parents worthy of your love, if you now have hearts to love them, I may safely leave that theme to your affections: "now" is for all things "the accepted time," now is the day for reconciliations: our life is a perpetual now. However unfilial you may have been, however stern or negligent they, if there is now the will to bless, and now the heart to love, all is well—well at the last, well now for evermore,—thank Heaven for so glad a consummation. Oh, that my pen had power to make many fathers kind, many children trustful! Oh, that by some burning word I could thaw the cold, shame sarcasms, and arouse the apathetic! Oh, that invoking upon every hearth, whereto this book may come, the full free blaze of home affections, my labor of love be anything but vain, when God shall have blessed what I am writing!

Yes, children, dear Maria did mourn for her father, but she mourned as those who hope; his life had been forgiven, and his death was as a saint's: as for her, rich rewarded daughter at the last, one word of warm acknowledgment, one look of true affection, one tear of deep contrition, would have been superabundant to clear away all the many clouds, the many storms of her past home-life: and as for our Maker, with His pure and spotless justice, faith in the sacrifice had passed all sin to Him, and love of the Redeemer had proved that faith the true one. How should a daughter mourn for such a soul? With tears—of joy; with sighs—of kindred hopefulness; with happiest resolve to live as he had died; with instant prayer that her last end be like his.

There is a plain tablet in St. Benet's Church, just within the altar rail, bearing—no inscription about Lord Mayoralty, Knighthood, or the Worshipful Company of Stationers,—but full of facts more glorious than every honor under Heaven; for the words run thus:—

SORROWFUL, YET REJOICING,

A DAUGHTER'S LOVE HAS PLACED THIS TABLET

TO THE MEMORY OF

THOMAS DILLAWAY;

A MAN WHO DIED IN THE FAITH OF CHRIST,

IN THE LOVE OF GOD, AND IN THE HOPE OF

HEAVEN.

Noble epitaph! Let us so live, that the like of this may be truth on our tombstones. Seek it, rather than wealth, before honor, instead of pleasure; for, indeed, those words involve within their vast significancy riches unsearchable, glory indestructible, and pleasure for evermore! Hide them, as a string of precious pearls, within the casket of your hearts.

I had almost forgotten, though Maria never could, another neighboring tablet to record the peaceful exit of her mother; however, as this had been erected by Sir Thomas in his life-time, and was plastered thick with civic glories and heathen virtues, possibly the transcript may be spared: there was only one sentence that looked true about the epitaph, though I wish it had been so in every sense; but, to common eyes, it had seemed quite suitable to the physical quietude of living Lady Dillaway, to say, "Her end was peace;" although, perhaps, the husband little thought how sore that mother's heart was for dear Maria's loss, how full of anxious doubts her mind about Maria's sin. Poor soul, however peaceful now that her spirit has read the truth, in the hour of her departure it had been with her far otherwise: her dying bed was as a troubled sea, for she died of a broken heart.

Yearly, on the anniversaries of their respective deaths, the growing clan of Clements make a solemn pilgrimage to their

grand paternal shrine, attending service on those days (or the holiday nearest to them), at St. Benet's Shere-hog: and Maria's eyes are very moist on such occasions; though hope sings gladly too within her wise and cheerful heart. She does not seem to have lost those friends; they are only gone before.

CHAPTER XVII.

The House of Feasting.

But in fact, with our happy married folks an anniversary of some sort is perpetually recurring: wedding-days, birth-days, and all manner of festival occasions, worthy (as the old Romans would have said) to be noted up with chalk, happened in that family of love weekly,—almost daily. They cultivated well the grateful soil of Heart, by a thousand little dressings and diggings; courting to it the warm sunshine of the skies, the zephyrs of pleasant recollections, and the genial dews of sympathy. And very wise were all those labors of delight; for their sons and their daughters grew up as the polished corners in the temple; moulded with delicate affections, their moral essence sharp, and clearly edged with sensitive feelings, as if they had sprung fresh from the hands of God, their sculptor, and the world had not rubbed off the master-touches of His chisel. For, in this dull world we cheat ourselves and one another of innocent pleasures by the score, through very carelessness and apathy: courted day after day by happy memories, we rudely brush them off with this indiscriminating besom, the stern material present: invited to help in rendering joyful many a patient heart, we neglect the little word that might have done it, and continually defraud creation of its share of kindliness from us. The child made merrier by your interest in his toy; the old domestic flattered by your seeing him look so well; the poor, better helped by your blessing than your penny (though give the penny too); the laborer, cheered upon his toil by a timely word of praise; the humble friend encouraged by your frankness; equals made to love you by the expression of your love; and superiors gratified by attention and respect, and looking out to benefit the kindly:—how many pleasures here for any hand to gather; how many blessings here for any heart to give! Instead of these what have we rife about the world? frigid

compliment,—for warmth is vulgar; reserve of tongue,—for it is folly to be talkative; composure, never at fault,—for feelings are dangerous things; gravity,—for that looks wise; coldness,—for other men are cold; selfishness,—for every one is struggling for his own. This is all false, all bad; the slavery chain of custom riveted by the foolishness of fashion; because, there ever is a band of men and women, who have nothing to recommend them but externals,—their looks or their dresses, their rank or their wealth, —and in order to exalt the honor of these, they agree to set a compact-seal of silence on the heart and on the mind; lest the flood of humbler men's affections, or of wiser men's intelligence, should pale their tinsel-praise; and the warm and the wise too softly acquiesce in this injury done to heartiness, shamed by the effrontery of cold calm fools, and the shallow dignity of an empty presence. Turn the tables on them, ye truer gentry, truer nobility, truer royalty of the heart and of the mind; speak freely, love warmly, laugh cheerfully, explain frankly, exhort zealously, admire liberally, advise earnestly,—be not ashamed to show you have a heart: and if some cold-blooded simpleton greet your social efforts with a sneer, repay him (for you can well afford a richer gift than his whole treasury possesses), repay him with a kind good-humored smile: it would have shamed Jack Dillaway himself. If a man persists to be silent in a crowd for vanity's sake, instead of sociable, as good company expects, count him simply for a fool; you will not be far wrong; he remembers the copy-book at school, no doubt, with its large-text aphorism, "Silence is Wisdom;" and thinking in an easy obedience to gain credit from mankind by acting on that questionable sentence, the result is what you perpetually see—a self-contained, self-satisfied, selfish, and reserved young puppy. Hint to such an incommunicative comrade, that the fashion now is coming about, to talk and show your wisdom; not to sit in shallow silence, hiding hard your folly; soon shall you loosen the floodgates of his speech; and society will even thank you for it; for, bore as the chatterer may ofttimes be, still he does the frank companion's duty; and at any rate is vastly preferable to the dull, unwarmed, unsympathetic watcher at the festal board, who sits there to exhibit his painted waistcoat instead of the heart that should be in it, and patiently waits, with

a snakish eye and a bitter tongue, to aid conversation with a sarcasm.

Henry and Maria had many hearty friends to keep their many anniversaries. They were well enough for wealth, as we may guess without much trouble; for the Knight had left three thousand a-year behind him, and Maria, as sole heiress, had no difficulty in establishing her claim to it: but it may be well to put mankind in memory, how hospitably, how charitably, how wisely, and how heartily, they stewarded it. I need not stop to tell of local charities assisted, good societies supported, and of philanthropic good done by means of their money, both at home and abroad: nor detail their many dinners, and other festal opportunities, rivets in the lengthening chain of ordinary friendship: but I do wish to make honorable mention of one happiest anniversary, which, whilst it commemorated fine young Master Harry's birth, rejoiced the many poor of Lower Sack Street, Islington.

The birth-day itself was kept at home with all the honors, in their old house at Finsbury Square; Maria would not leave that house, for old acquaintance sake. Master Harry, a frank-faced, open-hearted, curly-headed boy of ten (at least when I dined there, for he has probably grown older since), was of course the happy hero of the feast, ably supported by divers joyful brothers and sisters, who had all contributed to their elder brother's triumph on that day, by the contribution of their various presents,—one a little scent bag, another a rude drawing, another a bookmarker, and so forth, all probably worthless in the view of selfish calculation, but inestimable according to the currency of Heart. Half-a-dozen choice old friends closed the list of company; and a noisy rout of boys and girls were added in the early evening, full of negus and sponge-cake, snap-dragon, and blindman's-buff, with merry music, and a golden flood of dances and delight.

We dined early; and, to be very confidential with you, I thought (until I found out reasons why), that the bill of fare upon the table was inordinately large, not to say vulgar; for the board was overloaded with solid sweets and savories: so, in my uncharitable mind, I set all that down to the uncivilized hospitality asserted of a citizen's feast, and (for aught I know) still rife in St. Mary Axe and Finsbury Square.

Never mind how the dinner passed off, nor how jovially the children kept it up till near eleven: for I learnt, in an incidental way, what was regularly done upon the morrow; and I am sure it will gratify my readers to learn it too, as a trait of considerate kindness which will gladden man and woman's heart.

On the 7th of April in every year (Harry's birth-day was the sixth), Henry and Maria used to go on an humble pilgrimage to Lower Sack Street, Islington. Not to shame the poor by fine clothes or their usual equipage, they sedulously donned on that occasion the same now faded suits they had worn in their adversity, and made their progress in a hackney-coach. They would have walked for humility's sake and sympathy, but that the coach in question was crammed full of eatables and drinkables, nicely packed up in well-considered parcels, consisting of the vast *débris* of yesterday's overwhelming feast, with a sackful of tea and sugar added. Their pockets, also, as I took the liberty of inquiring at Sack Street afterwards, must have been well stored, for their largess was munificent. Then would they go to that identical lodgings of years gone by, where they had so struggled with adversity, now in the happy contrast of wealth and peace and thankfulness to heaven, and of joy at doing good. That parlor was right liberally hired for the day, and all the poor in Sack Street were privileged to call, where Mrs. Clements held her levee. They came in an orderly stream, clean for the occasion, and full of gratitude and blessings; and, to be just upon the poor, no impostor had ever been known to intrude upon the privilege of Sack Street. As for dear Maria, she regularly broke down just as the proceedings commenced, and Henry's manlier hand had to give away the spoil; whilst Maria sobbed beside him, as if her heart would break. Then did the good old nurse come in for a cold round of beef, with tea, sugar, and a sovereign; and the bedridden neighbor upstairs for jellied soup, and other condiments, with a similar royal climax; and the cobbler over the way carried off ham and chickens, with apple-puffs and a bottle of wine: and so some thirty or forty families were gladdened for the hour, and made wealthy for a week. Altogether they divided amongst them a coachful of comestibles, and a pocketful of coin.

It would be impertinent in us to intrude so far on privacy, as

to record how Henry and Maria passed much time in prayer and praise on that interesting anniversary; it is unnecessary too, for in fact they did not stop for anniversaries to do that sort of thing. Be sure that good thoughts and good words are ever found preceding good and grateful deeds. It is quite enough to know that they did God service in doing good to man.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The end of the Heartless.

THERE is plenty of contrast in this poor book, if that be any virtue. Let us turn our eyes away from those scenes of love and cheerfulness, of benevolence and peace. Let us leave Maria in her nursery, hearing the little ones their lessons; and Henry cutting the leaves of a nice new book, fresh from the press, whilst his home-taught son and heir is playing at pot-hooks and hangers in a copybook beside him. Let us recollect their purity of mind; their holiness of motive; and their happiness of life; these are the victims of falsewitness. And how fares the wretch that would have starved them?

The fate of John Dillaway is at once so tragical, so interesting, and so instructive, that it will be well for us to be transported for awhile, and give this rogue the benefit of honest company.

For many months I had seen a sullen lowering fellow, with cropped head, ironed-legs, and the motley garments of disgrace, driven forth at early morning with his gang of bad compeers; a slave, toiling till nightfall in piling cannon-balls, and chipping off the rust with heavy hammers; a sentinel stood near with a loaded musket; they might not speak to each other, that miserable gang: hope was dead among them; life had no delights; they wreaked their silent hatred on those hammered cannon-balls. The man who struck fiercest, that sullen convict with the lowering brow, was our stock-jobber, John Dillaway.

Soon after that foretaste of slavery at Woolwich, the ship sailed, freighted with incarnate crime; her captain was a ruffian (could he help it, with such cargoes?); her crew, the offscouring of all nations; and the Chesapeake herself was an old rotten hull, condemned, after one more voyage, to be broken up; a creaking, foul, unsafe vessel, full of rats, cockroaches, and other vermin.

The sun glared ungenially at that blot upon the waters, breed-

ing infectious disease; the waves flung the hated burden from one to the other, disdainful of her freight of sin; the winds had no commission for fair sailing, but whistled through the rigging crossways, howling in the ears of many in that ship, as if they carried ghosts along with them: the very rocks and reefs butted her off the creamy line of breakers, as sea-unicorns distorting; no affectionate farewells blessed her on departure; no hearty welcomes await her at the port.

And they sailed many days as in a floating hell, hot, miserable, and cursing; the scanty meal was flung to them like dog's-meat, and they lapped the putrid water from a pail; gang by gang for an hour they might pace the smoking deck, and then and thence were driven down, to fester in the hold for three-and-twenty more. O those closed hatches by night; what torments were the kernel of that ship! Suffocated by the heat and noxious smells; bruised against each other, and by each other's blows, as the black unwieldy vessel staggered about amongst the billows, the wretched mass of human misery wore away those tropical nights in horrid imprecation; worse than crowded slaves upon the Spanish Main, from the blister of crime upon their souls, and their utter lack of hopefulness for ever.

And now, after all the shattering storms, and haggard sufferings, and degrading terrors of that voyage, they neared the metropolis of Sin; some town on Botany Bay, a blighted shore,—where each man, looking at his neighbor, sees in him an outcast from heaven. They landed in droves, that ironed flock of men; and the sullenest-looking scoundrel of them all was John Dillaway.

There were murderers among his gang; but human passions, which had hurried them to crime, now had left them as if wrecked upon a lee shore,—humbled and remorseful, and heaven's happier sun shed some light upon their faces: there were burglars; but the courage which could dare those deeds, now lending strength to bear the stroke of punishment, enabled them to walk forth even cheerily to meet their doom of labor: there was rape; but he hid himself, ashamed, vowing better things: fiery arson, too, was there, sorry for his rash revenge: also, conspiracy and rebellion, confessing that ambition such as theirs had

been wickedness and folly; and common frauds, and crimes, and social sins; bad enough, God wot, yet hopeful: but the mean, heartless, devilish criminality of our young Dagon beat them all. If to be hard-hearted were a virtue, the best man there was Dillaway.

And now they were to be billeted off among the sturdy colonists, as farm-servants, near akin to slaves; tools in the rough hands of men who pioneer civilisation, with all the vices of the social, and all the passions of the savage. And on the strand, where those task-masters congregated to inspect the new-come droves, each man selected according to his mind: the rougher took the roughest, and the gentler the gentlest; the merry-looking field farmer sought out the cheerful, and the sullen backwoods settler chose the sullen. Dillaway's master was a swarthy, beetle-browed caitiff, who had worn out his own seven years of penalty, and had now set up tyrant for himself.

As a hewer of wood, and a drawer of water, in a stagnant little clearing of the forest, our convict toiled continually, continually,—like Caliban: all days alike; hewing at the mighty trunk, and hacking up the straggling branches; no hope, no help, no respite; and the iron of servile tyranny entered into his very soul. Aye, aye;—the culprit convicted, when he hears in open court, with an impudent assurance, the punishment that awaits him on those penal shores, little knows the terror of that sentence. Months and years, yea, haply to grey hairs and death, slavery unmitigated,—uncomforted; toil and pain; toil and sorrow; toil, and nothing to cheer; even to the end vain tasked toil. Old hopes, old recollections, old feelings, violently torn up by the roots. No familiar face in sickness, no patient nurse beside the dying bed: no hope for earth, and no prospect of heaven: but, in its varying phases, one gloomy glaring orb of ever-present hell.

It grew intolerable,—intolerable; he was beaten, mocked, and almost a maniac. Escape, escape!—Oh, blessed thought!—into the wild free woods!—there, with the birds, and flowers, hill and dale, fresh air and liberty!—Oh, glad hope—mad hope! His habitual cunning came to his aid; he schemed, he contrived, he accomplished. The jutting heads of the rivets having been diligently rubbed away from his galling fetter by a big stone—a toil

of weeks—he one day stood unshackled, having watched his time to be alone. An axe was in his hand and the saved single dinner of pea-bread. That beetle-browed task-master slumbered in the hut; that brother convict—(why need he care for him, too?—every one for himself in this world)—that kinder, humbler, better man, was digging in the open;—if he wants to escape, let him think of himself: John Dillaway has enough to take care for. Now, then; now, unobserved, unsuspected; now is the chance! Joy, life, and liberty! Oh, glorious prospect,—for this inland world is unexplored.

He stole away, with panting heart, and fearfully exulting eye; he ran, ran, ran, for miles,—it may have been scores of them,—till nightfall, on the soft and pleasant greensward under those high echoing woods. None pursued; safe, safe; and deliciously he slept that night beneath a spreading wattle-tree, after the first sweet meal of freedom.

Next morning, waked up like the starting kangaroos around him (for John Dillaway had not bent the knee in prayer since childhood), off he set triumphant and refreshed: his arm was strong, and he trusted in it; his axe was sharp, and he looked to that for help: he knew no other God. Off he set for miles, miles, miles: still that continuous high acacia wood, though less naturally park-like, oftentimes choked with briars, and here and there impervious ahead. Was it all this same starving forest to the wide world's end? He dug for roots, and found some acrid bulbs and tubers, which blistered up his mouth: but he was hungry, and ate them; and dreaded as he ate. Were they poisonous? Next to it, Dillaway; so he hurried eagerly to dilute their griping juices with the mountain streams, near which he slept: the water at least was kindly cooling to his hot throat; he drank huge draughts, and stayed his stomach.

Next morning, off again: why could he not catch and eat some of those half-tame antelopes? Ha! He lay in wait hours, hours, near the torrent to which they came betimes to slake their thirst: but their beautiful keen eyes saw him askance—and when he rashly hoped to hunt one down afoot, they went like the wind for a minute,—then turned to look at him afar off, mockingly:—poor, panting, baffled creeper.

No; give it up—this savory hope of venison; he must go despondently on and on; and he filled his belly with grass. Must he really starve in this interminable wood? He dreamt that night of luxurious city feasts, the turtle, turbot, venison, and champagne; and then how miserably weak he woke. But he must on, wearily and lamely, for ever through this wood,—objectless, except for life and liberty. Oh, that he could meet some savage, and do him battle for the food he carried; or that a dead bird, or beast, or snake lay upon his path; or that one of those skipping kangaroos would but come within the reach of his oft-aimed hatchet! No: for all the birds and flowers, and the free wild woods, and hill and dale, and liberty, he was starving, starving; so he browsed the grass as Nebuchadnezzar in his lunacy. And the famished wretch would have gladly been a slave again.

Next morning, he must lie and perish where he slept, or move on: he turned to the left, not to go on for ever; probably, aye too probably, he had been creeping round a belt. Oh, precious thought of change! for within three hours there was light ahead, light beneath the tangled underwood: he struggled through the last cluster of thick bushes, longing for a sight of fertile plains, and open country. Who knows? are there not men dwelling there with flocks and herds, and food and plenty? yes, yes, and Dillaway will do among them yet. You envious boughs, delay me not! He tore aside the last that hid his view, and found that he was standing on the edge of an ocean of sand—hot yellow sand to the horizon!

He fainted—he had like to have died; but as for prayer—he only muttered curses on this bitter, famishing disappointment. He dared not strike into the wood again—he dared not advance upon that yellow sea exhausted and unprovisioned: it was his wisdom to skirt the wood; and so he tramped along weakly, weakly. This liberty to starve is horrible!

Is it, John Dillaway? What, have you no compunctions at that word starve? no bitter, dreadful recollections? Remember poor Maria, that own most loving sister, wanting bread through you. Remember Henry Clements, and their pining babe;—remember your own sensual feastings and fraudulent exultation,

and how you would have utterly starved the good, the kind, the honest! This same bitter cup is filled for your own lips, and you must drink it to the dregs. Have you no compunctions, man? nothing tapping at your heart? for you must *starve!*

No! not yet, not yet! for chance (what Dillaway lyingly called chance)—in his moment of remorse at these reflections, when God had hoped him penitent at last, and if he still continued so might save him—sent help in the desert! For, as he reelingly tramped along on the rank herbage between this forest and that sea of sand, just as he was dying of exhaustion, his faint foot trod upon a store of life and health! It was an Emeu's ill-protected nest; and he crushed, where he had trodden, one of those invigorating eggs. Oh, joy, joy,—no thanks,—but sensual joy! There were three of them, and each one meat for a day; ash-colored without, but the within, the within, full of sweet and precious yolk! Oh, rich feast, luscious and refreshing: cheer up, cheer up: keep one to cross the desert with: aye, aye, luck will come at last to clever Jack! how shrewd it was of me to find those eggs!

Thus do the wicked forget thee, blessed God! thou hast watched this bad man, day by day, and all the dark nights through, in tender expectation of some good: Thou hast been with him hourly in that famishing forest, tempting him by starvation to —repentance; and how gladly did Thine eager mercy seize this first opportunity of half-formed penitence to bless and help him, even him, liberally and unasked! Thanks to Thee, thanks to Thee! Why did not that man thank Thee? Who more grieved at his thanklessness than Thou art? Who more sorry for the righteous and necessary doom which the impenitence of heartlessness drags down upon itself?

And Providence was yet more kind, and man yet more ungrateful; mercy abounding over the abundant sin. For the famished vagrant diligently sought about for more rich prizes; and, as the manner is of those unnatural birds to leave their eggs carelessly to the hatching of the sunshine, he soon stumbled on another nest. "Ha, ha!" said he, "clever Jack Dillaway of Broker's Alley isn't done up yet: no, no, trust him for taking care of number

one; now then for the desert; with these four huge eggs and my trusty hatchet, deuce take it, but I'll manage somehow!"

Thus, deriving comfort from his bold hard heart, he launched unhesitatingly upon that sea of sand: with aching toil through the loose hot soil he ploughed his weary way, footsore, for leagues, leagues, lengthened leagues; yellow sand all round, before, and on either hand, as far as eye can stretch, and behind already in the distance that terrible forest of starvation. But what, then, is the name of this burnt plain, unwatered by one liquid drop, unvisited even by dews in the cold dry night? Have you not yet found a heart, man, to thank Heaven for that kind supply of recreative nourishment, sweet as infants' food, the rich delicious yolk, which bears up still your halting steps across this world of sand? No heart, no heart of flesh,—but a stone, a cold stone, and hard as yonder rocky hillock.

He climbed it for a view,—and what a view! a panorama of perfect desolation, a continent of vegetable death. His spirit almost failed within him; but he must on, or perish where he stood. Taking no count of time, and heedless as to whither he might wander, so it be not back again along that awful track of liberty he longed for, he crept on by little and little, often resting, often dropping for fatigue, night and day, day and night: he had made his last meal; he laid him down to die,—and already the premonitory falcon flapped him with its heavy wing. Ha! what are all those carrion fowls congregated there for? Are they battening on some dead carcase? O, hope, hope! there is the smell of food upon the wind: up, man, up, battle with those birds, drive them away, hew down that fierce white eagle with your axe; what right have they to precious food, when man, their monarch, starves? So, the poor emaciated culprit seized their putrid prey, and the scared fowls hovered but a little space above, waiting instinctively for this new victim: they had not left him much—it was a feast of remnants,—pickings from the skeleton of some small creature that had perished in the desert,—a wombat, probably, starved upon its travels; but a royal feast it was to that famishing wretch; and, gathering up all the remainder of those priceless morsels, which he saved for some more fearful future, again he crept upon his way. Still the same, night and

day, day and night,—for he could only travel a league a day: and at length, a shadowy line between the sand and sky,—far, far off, but circling the horizon as a bow of hope. Shall it be a land of plenty, green, well watered meadows, the pleasant homes of man, though savage, not unfriendly? O hope, unutterable! or is it (O despair!) another of those dreadful woods, starving solitude under the high-arched gum-trees.

Onward he crept; and the line on the horizon grew broader and darker: onward still; he was exulting, he had conquered, he was bold and hard as ever. He got nearer, now within some dozen miles; it was an indistinct distance, but green at any rate; huzza,—never mind nightfall; he cannot wait, nor rest, with this Elysium before him: so he toiled along through all the black night, and a friendly storm of rain refreshed him, as his thirsty pores drank in the cooling stream. Aha! by morning's dawn he should be standing on the edge of that green paradise, fresh as a young lion, and no thanks to any one but his own shrewd indomitable self.

Morning dawned,—and through the vague twilight loomed some high and tangled wall of green foliage, stretching seemingly across the very world. Most sickening sight! a matted, thorny jungle, one of those primeval woods again, but closer, thicker, darker than the park-like one before; rank and prickly herbage in a rotting swamp, crowding up about the stately trees. Must he battle his way through? Well, then, if it must be so, he must and will; anything rather than this hot and blistering sand. If he is doomed by fate to starve, be it in the shade, not in that fierce sun. So, he weakly plied his hatchet, flinging himself with boldness on that league-thick hedge of thorns; his way was choked with thorns; he struggled under tearing spines, and through prickly underwood, and over tangled masses of briery plants, clinging to him everywhere around, as with a thousand taloned claws; he is exhausted, extrication is impossible; he beats the tough creepers with his dulled hatchet, as a wounded man vainly; ha! one effort more,—a dying effort,—must he be impaled upon these sharp aloes, and strange-leafed prickly shrubs; they have caught him there, those thirsty poisoned hooks, innumerable as his sins; his way, whichever way he looks, is hedged

up high with thorns, thickset thorns, sturdy tearing thorns, that he cannot battle through them. Emaciated, bleeding, rent, fainting, famished, he must perish in the merciless thicket into which hard-heartedness has flung him!

Before he was well dead, those flapping carrion fowls had found him out; they were famishing too, and half forgot their natural distaste for living meat. He fought them vainly, as the dying fight: soon there were other screams in that echoing solitude, besides the screeching falcons!—and when they reached his heart (if its matter aptly typified its spirit), that heart should have been a very stone for hardness.

So let the selfish die! alone, in the waste howling wilderness; so let him starve uncared-for, whose boast it was that he had never felt for other than himself,—who mocked God, and scorned man,—whose motto throughout life, one sensual, unsympathizing, harsn routine, was this:—"Take care of the belly, and the heart will take care of itself,"—who never had a wish for other's good, a care for other's evil, a thought beyond his own base carcase; who was a man,—no man,—a wretch, without a heart. So let him perish miserably; and the white eagles pick his skeleton clean in yonder tangled jungle!

CHAPTER XIX.

Wherein matters are concluded.

CERTAIN folks at Ballyriggan, near Belfast, observe to me, witn not a little Irish truth, that it is by no means easy to conclude a history never intended to be finished. It so happens that my good friends the clan Clements, are still enjoying life and all its sweets, beneficent in their generation; and as for their Hearts' affections, that story without an end will still be heard, ringing on its happy changes, in the presence of God and of his immortal train, when every reader of these records shall have been to this world dead. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and within it is life's well-spring. Death is but a little narrow gate, in a dark rough pass among the mountains, where each must go alone, one by one, in solemn silence, for the avalanches hanging overhead; one by one, in breathless caution, for there is but barely a footing; one by one, for none can help his brother on the track: the steady eye of faith, the firm foot of righteousness, the staff of hope to comfort and support,—these be the only helps. And each one carries with him, as his sole possession on that lonely journey, no heaps of wealth—no trappings of honor; these burdens of the camel must all be lifted off, ere he can struggle through that gully in the rocks,—"The Needle's Eye;" but the sole possession which every wayfarer must take with him into those broad plains where only Spirit can be seen, and Sin no longer can be hid, is the shrine of his affections, the casket of his precious pearls in life—his Heart, unmantled and unmasked. And if in time it had been a well of love, flowing towards God in penitence, and irrigating this world's garden with charities and blessed works, that little sparkling stream shall then burst forth from this rocky portal of the grave, a river of joy and peace, to gladden even more the sunny pro-

vinces of heaven. For the heart with its affections, never dieth: they may, indeed, flow inward, and corrupt to selfishness; becoming then, in lieu of fountains of waters, gushing forth to everlasting life, a bottomless volcano of hot lava, tempestuous and involved, setting up the creature as his own foul god, and living the perpetual death-bed of the damned; or they may nobly burst the banks of self, and, rising momentarily higher and higher, till every Nilometer is drowned, will seek for ever, with expanding strength, to reach the unapproachable level of that source in the Most Highest whence they originally sprung. For this cause, the kindest fatherly word which ever reached man's ear, the surest scheme for happiness that ever touched his reason, was one from God's own heart:—"My son, give me thy heart."

They lived upon the blessing of that Word, our noble, kindly pair. To enlarge upon the thought as respects a better world is well for those who will: for if He that made the eye and framed the ear, by the stronger argument Himself must see and hear, so He that fashioned loveliness and moulded the affections, how well deserving must that Beautiful Spirit be of his rational creature's heart! Away with mawkish cant and stale sentimentalities! let us think, and speak, and feel as men, framed by Nature's urgent law to love the lovely and to hate the vile. Oh that the advocates for Him, the Good One, would oftener plead His cause by the human affections,—by generosity, by sympathy, by gentleness and patience, by self-denying love, and soul-absolving beauty; for these are of the essence of God, and their spiritual influence on reason's child writes upon his heart that warmer code of morals, which the iron tool of threatening availeth not to grave upon the rock, while the voice of love can change that rock into a spring of water.

But we must descend from our altitudes, and speak of lower things; for the time and space forbid much longer intrusion on your courtesy. A few ravelling threads of this our desultory tale have yet to be gathered up, as tidily as may be. Suffer, then, such mingling of my thoughts: the web I weave has many threads, woven with divers colors. Human nature is nothing if not inconsistent; and I have no more notion of irreverence in turning from a high topic to a low one, than a bee may be fancied

to have of irrelevant idleness in flitting from the sweet violet to the scentless dahlia. We may gather honey out of every flower. Have you not often noticed, that riches generally come to a man, when he least stands in need of them? Directly a middle-aged heir succeeds to his long-expected heritage, half-a-dozen aunts and second cousins are sure to die off and leave him superabounding legacies, any one of which would have helped his poverty-stricken youth, and made him of independent mind throughout his servile manhood. The other day (the idea remains the same, though the fact is to be questioned) the richest lord in Europe dug up a chest of hoarded coins, many thousand pounds' worth, simply because he didn't want it: and, if such particularization were not improper and invidious, you or I might name a brace of friends a-piece, who, having once lacked bread in their career of life, suddenly have found themselves monopolizing two or three great fortunes. As too few things are certain novel writers less like truth in their descriptions, than where ample wealth falls upon the hero just in the nick of time. Providence intends to teach by penury; yes, and by prosperity too: and we almost never see the reward given, or the no less reward withheld, just as the scholar has begun to spell his lesson, and before he has had the chance of getting it by Heart.

That another death should occur, in the progress of this tale, must be counted for no fault of mine; especially as I am not about to introduce another death-bed. One need not have the mummy always at our feasts. Surely, too, these deaths have ever been on fit occasion: one broken heart; one bereaved, yet comforted; and one which perished in its sin of uttermost hard-heartedness. And here, if any Insurance clerk, or other interested person, will show cause why Mrs. Jane Mackenzie should not die at the age of ninety-two, I would keep her alive if I could; but the fact is, I cannot: she died. Henry Clements never saw her, any more than I, nor dear Maria. But that was no earthly reason wherefore—

First, Maria should not bewail the dear old relative's loss with all her heart and eyes, and children and household in mourning.

Nor, secondly, wherefore Mrs. Jane Mackenzie, aforesaid, of Ballyriggan, province of Ulster, should not leave her estate of Ballyriggan, aforesaid, and a vast heap of other property, to the

only surviving, though distant scion of her family, Henry Clements.

Nor, thirdly, wherefore I should not record the fact, as duly bound in my capacity of honest historian.

This accession of property was large, almost overwhelming, when added to Maria's patrimony of three thousand a year, the produce of St. Benet's Sherehog: for besides and beyond a considerable breadth of Irish acres, sundry houses in Belfast, and an accumulation of half-forgotten funds, the Bank of England found itself necessitated (from particular circumstances of ill caution in its servants) to refund the whole of that 12,043*l.* bank annuities, which Jack Dillaway and his ladies had already made away with.

Rich, however, as Clements had become, he felt himself only as a great lord's steward to help a needy world; and I never heard that he spent a sixpence more upon himself, his equipage, or his family, from being some thousands a year richer: though I certainly did hear that, owing to this legacy, every tenant upon Ballyriggan, and a vast number of struggling families in Spitalfields and round about St. Benet's, had ample cause to bless Heaven and the good man of Finsbury Square. As for dear Maria, it rejoiced her generous heart to find that Henry (whose gentlemanly pride had all along been reproaching him for pauperism) was now become pretty well her equal in wealth; even as her humility long had known him her superior in mind, good looks, and good family.

Another thread in my discourse, hanging loosely on the world, concerns our ladies-legatees. What became of Miss Julia, after the safe and successful issue of that vengeful trial, I never heard; and, perhaps, it may be wise not to inquire: if she changed her name, she did not change her nature; and is probably still to be numbered among the sect of Strand peripatetics.

But of Anna Bates, I have pleasanter news to tell. With respect to repentance, let us be charitable and hope, even if we cannot be so sanguine as firmly to believe; but at any rate we may rest assured of an outward reformation, and an honest manner of life. The miracle happened thus. After the trial and condemnation of Dillaway, poor Anna Bates felt entirely disappointed that she had

not the chance of better things presented to her mind by transportation; the two approvers, to her dismay, poor thing, were graciously pardoned for their evidence; and, whereas, the one of them returned to her old courses more devotedly than ever, the other resolved to make one strong effort to extricate her loathing self from the gulph in which she lay. Fortunately for her, our Maria had the heart to pity and to help a frail and fallen sister; and when the poor disconsolate woman, finding her to be the sister of that evil paramour, came to Mrs. Clements in distress, revealing all her past sins and sorrows, and pleading for some generous hand to lift her out of that miserable state, she did not plead in vain. Maria spurned her not away, nor coldly disbelieved her promise of amendment; but, taking counsel of her husband, she gave the poor woman sufficient means of setting up a milliner's shop at Hull, where, under her paternal name of Stellingburne, our Fleet Street lady-legatee still survives, earning a decent livelihood, and little suspected amongst her kindly neighbors, of ever having been much worse than a strictly honest woman.

For another thread, if the reader, in his ample curiosity, wishes to be informed how it became possible for me to learn the fate of Dillaway, let him know, that up to the hour of escape, I derived it easily from living witnesses; and thereafter, that certain settlers, having set out to explore the country, found a human skeleton stretched upon a thicket, which, from the débris of convicts' clothes, and the hatchet stamped with his initials, was easily decided to be that bad man's. It always had struck me, as a remarkable piece of retribution, that whereas John made Austral shares a plea for ruining Henry Clements, a howling Austral wilderness was made the means of starving him. Maria never heard what became of her brother; but still looks for his return some day with affectionate and earnest expectation.

Another little matter to be mentioned is the fact, that Henry Clements, in his leisure from business, and freedom from care, resolved to attain to some literary glories; and first, he published his now renowned tragedy of Boadicea, with his name at length, giving a mint of proceeds to that very proper charity the Theatrical Fund. Secondly, he followed up his tragic triumph by a

splendid "Caractacus," by way of a companion picture. Thirdly, he turned to his maligned law-treatise on Defence, and boldly published a capital vindication thereof, flinging down his gauntlet to the judges both of law and literature. It was strange, by the way, and instructive also, to find with what a deferential air the wealthy writer now was listened to; and how meekly both Watchman and Corinthian kissed the smiting hand of the literary genius, who—gave such sumptuous dinners; for Henry, of his mere kindness (not bribery—don't imagine him so weak), now that he was known as a Mæcenas amongst authors, made no invidious distinctions between literary magnates, but effectually overcame evil with good by his hearty hospitality to Corinthian and Watchman editors, as well as to other potent wielders of the pen of fame, who had erst-while favored the productions of his genius.

The last dinner he gave, I, an old friend of the family, was present; and when the ladies went up-stairs, I had, as usual, the honor of enacting vice. It was according to Finsbury taste and custom, to produce toasts and speeches; whether cold high-breeding would have sanctioned this or not, little matters: it was warm and cordial, and we all liked it; moreover, finding ourselves at Rome, we unanimously did as other Romans do: and this I take to be politeness. Among the speeches, that which proposed the health of the host and hostess caused the chiefest roar of clamorous joy: it was a happy-looking friend who spoke, and what he said was much as follows:

"Clements, my dear fellow, you are the happiest man I know —except myself; at least in one thing I am happier,—for I can call you friend, whereas you can only return the compliment with such a sorry substitute as I am."

[This ingenious flattery was much ridiculed afterwards; but I pledge my word the man intended what he said: moreover he went on, utterly regardless of surrounding critics, in all the seeming egotism of a warm and open heart.]

"Clements—I cannot help telling you how heartily I love you;" (Hear, hear!) "and I wish I had known you thirty years instead of three, to have said so with the unction of my earliest recollections: but we cannot help antiquity, you know. Let us all the rather make up now by heartiness for all lost time. I think,

nay, am sure, that I speak the language of all present in telling you, I love you;" (an enormous hear-hearing, which rose above the drawing-room floor; Harry Clements singularly distinguished himself, in proving how he loved his father; a fine young fellow he grows too, and I wish, between ourselves, to catch him for a son-in-law some day;)—"Yes, Clements, I do love you, and your children, and your wife, for there is the charm of Heart about you all; in yourself, in your Maria, in that fine frank youth, and those dear warm girls up stairs" (every word was bravoed to the echo), "in every one of you, all the charities and amenities, all the kindnesses and the cheerfulness of life appear to be embodied; you love both God and man; the rich and the poor alike may bless you, Clements, and your admirable Maria; whilst, as for yourselves, you may both well thank God, whose mercy made you what you are."

Clements hid his face, and Harry sobbed with joyfulness.

"Friends! a toast and sentiment, with all the honors:—'This happy family! and may all who know them now, or come to hear of them in future, cultivate as they do all the home-affections, and acknowledge that there is no wealth of man's, which may compare with Riches of the Heart.'"

THE END.

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THE CROCK OF GOLD.

THE CROCK OF GOLD:

A RURAL NOVEL.

BY

MARTIN FARQUHAR TUPPER,

AUTHOR OF

"PROVERBIAL PHILOSOPHY."

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THE CROCK OF GOLD.

CHAPTER I.

The Laborer: and his dawning Discontent.

ROGER ACTON woke at five. It was a raw March morning, still dark and bitterly cold, whilst at gusty intervals the rain beat in against the crazy cottage-window. Nevertheless, from his poor pallet he must up and rouse himself, for it will be open weather by sunrise, and his work lies two miles off; Master Jennings is not the man to show him favor if he be late, and Roger cannot afford to lose an hour: so, he shook off the luxury of sleep, and rose again to toil with a weary effort.

"Honest Roger," as the neighbors called him, was a fair specimen of a class which has been Britain's boast for ages, and may be still again, in measure, but at present that glory appears to be departing: a class much neglected, much enduring; thoroughly English,—just, industrious, and patient; true to the altar, and loyal to the throne; though haply shaken somewhat now from both those noble faiths,—warped in their principles, and blunted in their feelings, by lying doctrines and harsh economies; a class,—I hate the cold cant term,—a race of honorable men, full of cares, pains, privations,—but of pleasures next to none; whose life at its most prosperous estate is Labor, and in death we count him happy who did not die a pauper. Through them, serfs of the soil, the earth yields indeed her increase, but it is for others; from the fields of plenty they glean a scanty

pittance, and fill the barns to bursting while their children cry for bread. Not that Roger for his part often wanted work; he was the best hand in the parish, and had earned of his employers long ago the name of Steady Acton; but the fair wages for a fair day's labor were quite another thing, and the times went very hard for him and his. A man himself may starve, while his industry makes others fat: and a liberal landlord all the winter through may keep his laborers in work, whilst a crafty overbearing bailiff mulcts them in their wages.

For the outward man, Acton stood about five feet ten, a gaunt, spare, and sinewy figure, slightly bent; his head sprinkled with grey; his face marked with those rigid lines, which tell, if not of positive famine, at least of too much toil on far too little food; in his eye patience and good temper; in his carriage a mixture of the sturdy bearing, necessary to the habitual exercise of great muscular strength, together with that gait of humility,—almost humiliation, which is the seal of oppression upon poverty. He might be about forty, or from that to fifty, for hunger, toil, and weather had used him the roughest; while, for all beside, the patched and well-worn smock, the heavily-clouted highlaced boots, a dingy worsted necktye, and an old felt hat, complete the picture of externals.

But, for the matter of character within, Roger is quite another man. If his rank in this world is the lowest, many potentates may envy him his State elsewhere. His heart is as soft, as his hand is horny; with the wandering gipsy or the tramping beggar, thrust aside (perhaps deservedly) as impudent impostors from the rich man's gate, has he ofttimes shared his noonday morsel: upright and sincere himself, he thinks as well of others: he scarcely ever heard the Gospels read in church, specially about Eastertide, but the tears would trickle down his weather-beaten face: he loves children,—his neighbors' little ones as well as his own: he will serve any one for goodness' sake without reward or thanks, and is kind to the poor dumb cattle: he takes quite a pride in his little rod or two of garden, and is early and late at it, both before and after the daily sum of labor: he picks up a bit of knowledge here and there, and somehow has contrived to amass a fund of information for which few would

give him credit from his common looks; and he joins to that stock of facts a natural shrewdness to use his knowledge wisely. Though with little of what is called sentiment, or poetry, or fancy in his mind (for harsh was the teaching of his childhood, and meagre the occasions of self-culture ever since), the beauty of creation is by no means lost upon him, and he notices at times its wisdom too. With a fixed habit of manly piety ever on his lips and ever in his heart, he recognizes Providence in all things, just, and wise, and good. More than so; simply as a little child who endures the school hour for the prospect of his play-time, Roger Acton bears up with noble meekness against present suffering, knowing that his work and trials and troubles are only for a little while, but his rest and his reward remain a long hereafter. He never questioned this; he knew right well Who had earned it for him; and he lived grateful and obedient, filling up the duties of his humble station. This was his faith, and his works followed it. He believed that God had placed him in his lot, to be a laborer and till God's earth, and, when his work is done, to be sent on better service in some happier sphere: the where, or the how, did not puzzle him, any more than divers other enigmatical whys and wherefores of his present state; he only knew this, that it would all come right at last; and, barring sin (which he didn't comprehend), somehow all was right at present. What if poverty pinched him? he was a great heir still;—what if oppression bruised him? it would soon be over. He trusted to his Pilot, like the landsman in a storm; to his Father, as an infant in the dark. For guilt he had a Saviour, and he thought of him in penitence; for trouble a Guardian, and he looked to him in peace; and as for toil, back-breaking toil, there was another Master whom he served with spade and mattock and a thankful heart, while he seemed only to be working for the landlord or his bailiff.

Such a man then had been Roger Acton from his youth up till now, or, if sadness must be told, nearly until now; for, to speak truth, his heart at times would fail him, and of late he had been bitter in repinings and complaint. For a day or two, in particular, he had murmured loudly. It was hard, very hard, that an honest industrious man, as he was, should so scantily

pick a living out of this rich earth: after all said, let the parson preach as he will, it 's a fine thing to have money, and that his reverence knows right well, or he wouldn't look so closely for his dues. [N. B. Poor Mr. Evans was struggling as well as he could to bring up six children, on a hundred and twenty pounds per annum.] Roger, too, was getting on in years, with a blacker prospect for the future than when he first stood behind a plough-tail. Then there were many wants unsatisfied, which a bit of gold might buy; and his wife teased him to be doing something better. Thus was it come at length to pass, that, although he had endured so many years, he now got discontented at his penury;—what human heart can blame him?—and with murmurings came doubt; with doubt of providence, desire of lucre; so the sunshine of religion faded from his path;—what mortal mind can wonder?

CHAPTER II.

The Family; the Home; and more Repinings.

Now, if Malthus and Martineau be verily the pundits that men think them, Roger had twice in life done a very foolish thing: he had sinned against society, statistics, and common sense, by a two-fold marriage. The wife of his youth (I am afraid he married early) had once been kitchen-maid at the Hall; but the sudden change from living luxuriously in a great house, to the griping poverty of a cottar's hovel, had changed in three short years the buxom country girl into an emaciated shadow of her former self, and the sorrowing husband buried her in her second childbed. The powers of the parish clapped their hands; political economy was glad; prudence chuckled; and a coarse-featured farmer (he meant no ill), who occasionally had given Roger work, heartlessly bade him be thankful that his cares were the fewer and his incumbrance was removed; "Ay, and Heaven take the babies also to itself," the Herodian added. But Acton's heart was broken! scarcely could he lift up his head; and his work, though sturdy as before, was more mechanical, less high-motived: and many a year of dreary widowhood he mourned a loss all the greater, though anything but bitterer, for the infants so left motherless. To these, now grown into a strapping youth and a bright-eyed graceful girl, had he been the tenderest of nurses, and well supplied the place of her whom they had lost. Neighbors would have helped him gladly—sometimes did; and many was the hinted offer (disinterested enough, too, for in that match penury must have been the settlement, and starvation the dower), of giving them a mother's kindly care; but Roger could not quite so soon forget the dead: so he would carry his darlings with him to his work, and feed them with his own hard hands; the farmers winked at it, and never said a word

against the tiny trespassers; their wives and daughters loved the little dears, bringing them milk and possets; and holy angels from on high may have ofttimes hovered about this rude nurse, tending his soft innocents afield, and have wept over the poor widower and his orphans, tears of happy sorrow and benevolent affection. Yea, many a good angel has shed blessings on their heads!

Within the last three years, and sixteen from the date of his first great grief, Roger had again got married. His daughter was growing into early womanhood, and his son gave him trouble at times, and the cottage wanted a ruling hand over it when he was absent, and rheumatism now and then bade him look out for a nurse before old age, and Mary Alder was a notable middle-aged careful sort of soul, and so she became Mary Acton. All went on pretty well, until Mrs. Acton began to have certain little ones of her own; and then the step-mother would break out (a contingency poor Roger hadn't thought of), separate interests crept in, and her own children fared before the others; so it came to pass that, however truly there was a ruling hand at home, and however well the rheumatism got nursed (for Mary was a good wife in the main), the grown-up son and daughter felt themselves a little jostled out. Grace, gentle and submissive, found all her comforts shrunk within the space of her father and her bible; Thomas, self-willed and open-hearted, sought his pleasure anywhere but at home, and was like to be taking to wrong courses through domestic bickering: Grace had the dangerous portion, beauty, added to her lowly lot, and attracted more admiration than her father wished, or she could understand; while the frank and bold spirit of Thomas Acton exposed him to the perilous friendship of Ben Burke the poacher, and divers other questionable characters.

Of these elements, then, are our laborer and his family composed; and before Roger Acton goes abroad at earliest streak of dawn, we will take a casual peep within his dwelling. It consists of four bare rubble walls, enclosing a grouted floor, worn unevenly, and here and there in holes, and puddly. There are but two rooms in the tenement, one on the ground and one overhead; which latter is with no small difficulty got at by scaling a

ladder-like staircase that fronts the cottage door. This upper chamber, the common dormitory for all but Thomas, who sleeps down stairs, has a thin partition at one end of it, to screen off the humble truckle-bed where Grace Acton forgets by night the troubles of the day; and the remainder of the little apartment, sordid enough, and overhung with the rough thatch black with cobweb, serves for the father and mother with their recent nursery. Each room has its shattery casement, to let in through lichened panes, the doubtful light of summer, and the much more indubitable wind, and rain, and frost of wintry nights. A few articles of crockery and some burnished tins decorate the shelves of the lower apartment; which used to be much tidier before the children came, and trimmer still when Grace was sole manager: in a doorless cupboard are apparent sundry coarse edibles, as the half of a huge unshapely home-made loaf, some white country cheese, a mass of lumpy pudding, and so forth; beside it, on the window-sill, is better bread, a well-thumbed Bible, some tracts, and a few odd volumes picked up cheap at fairs; an old musket (occasionally Ben's companion, sometimes Tom's) is hooked to the rafters, near a double rope of onions; divers gaudy little prints, tempting spoil of pedlars, in honor of George Barnwell, the Prodigal Son, the Sailor's Return, and the Death of Nelson, decorate the walls, and an illuminated Christmas carol is pasted over the mantel-piece: which, amongst other chattels and possessions, conspicuously bears its own burden of Albert and Victoria,—two plaster heads, resplendently colored, highly varnished, looking with arched eyebrows of astonishment on their uninviting palace, and royally contrasting with the sombre hue of poverty on all things else. The pictures had belonged to Mary, no small portion of her virgin wealth; and as for the statuary, those two busts had cost loyal Roger far more in comparison than any corporation has given to a P.R.A., for Majesty and Consortship in full. There is, moreover, in the room, by way of household furniture, a ricketty, triangular and tri-legged table, a bench, two old chairs with rush-bottoms, and a yard or two of matting that the sexton gave when the chancel was new laid. I don't know that there is anything else to mention, unless it be a gaunt lurcher belonging to Ben Burke, and with all a dog's

resemblance to his master, who lies stretched before the hearth where the peaty embers never quite die out, but smoulder away to a heap of white ashes; over these is hanging a black boiler, the cook of the family; and beside them, on a substratum of dry heather, and wrapt about with an old blanket, nearly companioned by his friend the dog, snores Thomas Acton, still fast asleep, after his usual extemporaneous fashion.

As to the upstairs apartment, it contained little or nothing but its living inmates, their bedsteads and tattered coverlids, and had an air of even more penury and discomfort than the room below; so that, what with squalling children, a scolding wife, and empty stomach, and that cold and wet March morning, it is little wonder maybe (though no small blame), that Roger Acton had not enough of religion or philosophy to rise and thank his Maker for the blessings of existence.

He had just been dreaming of great good luck. Poor people often do so; just as Ugolino dreamt of imperial feasts, and Bruce, in his delirious thirst on the Sahara, could not banish from his mind the cool fountains of Shiraz, and the luxurious waters of old Nile. Roger had unfortunately dreamt of having found a crock of gold,—I dare say he will tell us his dream anon,—and just as he was counting out his treasure, that blessed beautiful heap of shining money, cruel habit roused him up before the dawn, and his wealth faded from his fancy. So he awoke at five anything but cheerfully.

It was Grace's habit, good girl, to read to her father in the morning a few verses from the volume she best loved: she always woke betimes when she heard him getting up, and he could hear her easily from her little flock-bed behind the lath partition; and many a time had her dear religious tongue, uttering the words of peace, soothed her father's mind, and strengthened him to meet the day's affliction; many times it raised his thoughts from the heavy cares of life to the buoyant hopes of immortality. Hitherto, Roger had owed half his meek contentedness to those sweet lessons from a daughter's lips, and knew that he was reaping, as he heard, the harvest of his own paternal care, and heaven-blest instructions. However, upon this dark morning, he was full of other thoughts, murmurings, and doubts,

and poverty, and riches. So, when Grace, after her usual affectionate salutations, gently began to read,

"The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory—,"

Her father strangely stopped her on a sudden with

"Enough, enough, my girl! God wot, the sufferings are grievous, and the glory long a-coming."

Then he heavily went down stairs, and left Grace crying

CHAPTER III.

The Contrast.

THUS, full of carking care, while he pushed aside the proffered consolation, Roger Acton walked abroad. There was yet but a glimmer of faint light, and the twittering of birds told more assuringly of morning than any cheerful symptom on the sky: however, it had pretty well ceased raining, that was one comfort, and as Roger, shouldering his spade, and with the day's provision in a handkerchief, trudged out upon his daily duty, those good old thoughts of thankfulness came upon his mind, and he forgot awhile the dream that had unstrung him. Turning for a moment to look upon his hovel, and bless its inmates with a prayer, he half resolved to run back, and hear a few more words, if only not to vex his darling child: but there was now no time to spare; and then, as he gazed upon her desolate abode—so foul a casket for so fair a jewel—his bitter thoughts returned to him again, and he strode away, repining.

Acton's cottage was one of those doubtful domiciles, whose only recommendation it is, that they are picturesque in summer. At present we behold a reeking rotting mass of black thatch in a cheerless swamp; but, as the year wears on, those time-stained walls, though still both damp and mouldy, will be luxuriantly overspread with creeping plants,—honeysuckle, woodbine, jessamine, and the everblowing monthly rose. Many was the touring artist it had charmed, and Suffolk-street had seen it often: spectators looked upon the scene as on an old familiar friend, whose face they knew full well, but whose name they had forgotten for the minute. Many were the fair hands that had immortalized its beauties in their albums, and frequent the notes of admiration uttered by attending swains: particularly if there chanced to be taken into the view a feathery elm that now creaked overhead,

and dripped on the thatch like the dropping-well at Knaresborough, and (in the near distance) a large pond, or rather lake, upon whose sedgy banks, gay—not now, but soon about to be—with flowering reeds and bright green willows, the pretty cottage stood. In truth, if man were but an hibernating animal, invisible as dormice in the winter, and only to be seen with summer swallows, Acton's cottage at Hurstley might have been a cantle cut from the Elysian-fields. But there are certain other seasons in the year, and human nature cannot long exist on the merely "picturesque in summer."

Some fifty yards, or so, from the hither shore, we discern a roughly wooded ait, Pike Island to wit, a famous place for fish, and the grand rendezvous for woodcocks; which, amongst other useful and ornamental purposes, serves to screen out the laborer's hovel, at this the narrowest part of the lake, from a view of that fine old mansion on the opposite shore, the seat of Sir John Vincent, a baronet just of age, and the great landlord of the neighborhood. Toward this mansion, scarcely yet revealed in the clear grey eye of morning, our humble hero, having made the long round of the lake, is now fast trudging; and it may merit a word or two of plain description, to fill up time and scene, till he gets nearer.

A smooth grassy eminence, richly studded with park-like clumps of trees, slopes up from the water's very edge to—Hurstley Hall; yonder goodly, if not grand, Elizabethan structure, full of mullioned windows, carved oak panels, stone-cut coats of arms, pinnacles, and traceries, and lozenges, and drops; and all this glory crowned by a many-gabled, high-peaked roof. A grove of evergreens and American shrubs hides the lower windows from vulgarian gaze—for, in the neighborly feeling of our ancestors, a public way leads close along the front; while, behind the house, and inaccessible to eyes profane, are drawn terraced gardens, beautifully kept, and blooming with a perpetual succession of the choicest flowers. The woods and shrubberies around, attempted some half a century back to be spoilt by the meddlesome bad taste of Capability Brown, have been somewhat too resolutely robbed of the formal avenues, clipped hedges, and other topiarian adjuncts which comport so

well with the starch prudery of things Elizabethan; but they are still replete with grotto, fountain, labyrinth, and alcove—a very paradise for the more court-bred rank of sylphs, and the gentler elves of Queen Titania.

However, we have less to do with the gardens than, probably, the elves have; and as Roger now, just at breaking day, is approaching the windows somewhat too curiously for a poor man's manners, it may not be amiss if we bear him company. He had pretty well recovered of his fit of discontent, for morning air and exercise can soon chase gloom away; so he cheerily tramped along, thinking as he went how that, after all, it is a middling happy world, and how that the raindrops, now that it had cleared up, hung like diamonds on the laurels, when of a sudden, as he turned a corner near the house, there broke upon his ear, at that quiet hour, such a storm of boisterous sounds—voices so loud with oaths and altercation—such a calling, clattering, and quarrelling, as he had never heard the like before. So no wonder that he stepped aside to see it.

The noise proceeded from a ground-floor window, or rather from three windows, lighted up, and hung with draperies of crimson and gold: one of the casements, flaring meretriciously in the modest eye of morn, stood wide open, down to the floor, probably to cool a heated atmosphere; and when Roger Acton, with a natural curiosity, went on tiptoe, looked in, and just put aside the curtain for a peep, to know what on earth could be the matter, he saw a vision of waste and wealth, at which he stood like one amazed, for a poor man's mind could never have conceived its equal.

Evidently, he had intruded on the latter end of a long and luxurious revel. Wax-lights, guttering down in gilded chandeliers, poured their mellow radiance round in multiplied profusion,—for mirrors made them infinite; crimson and gold were the rich prevailing tints in that wide and warm banqueting room; gaily colored pictures, set in frames that Roger fancied massive gold, hung upon the walls at intervals; a wagon-load of silver was piled upon the sideboard; there blazed in the burnished grate such a fire as poverty might imagine on a frozen winter's night, but never can have thawed its blood beside: fruits, and wines,

and costly glass were scattered in prodigal disorder on the board,—just now deserted of its noisy guests, who had crowded round a certain green table, where cards and heaps of sovereigns appeared to be mingled in a mass. Roger had never so much as conceived it possible that there could be wealth like this: it was a fairy-land of Mammon in his eyes: he stood gasping like a man enchanted; and in the contemplation of these little hills of gold,—in their covetous longing contemplation, he forgot the noisy quarrel he had turned aside to see, and thirsted for that rich store earnestly.

In an instant, as he looked (after the comparative lull that must obviously have succeeded to the clamors he had first heard), the roar and riot broke out worse than ever. There were the stormy revellers, as the rabble rout of Comus and his crew, filling that luxurious room with the sounds of noisy execration and half-drunken strife. Young Sir John, a free and generous fellow, by far the best among them all, has collected about him those whom he thought friends, to celebrate his wished majority; they had now kept it up, night after night, hard upon a week; and, as well became such friends,—the gambler, the duellist, the man of pleasure, and the fool of fashion,—they never yet had separated for their daylight beds, without a climax to their orgy, something like the present scene.

Henry Mynton, high in oath and dashing down his cards, has charged Sir Richard Hunt with cheating (it was *sauter la coupe* or *couper le saut*, or some such mystery of iniquity, I really cannot tell which): Sir Richard, a stout dark man, the patriarch of the party, glossily wigged upon his head, and imperially tufted on his chin, retorts with a pungent sarcasm calmly and coolly uttered; that hot-headed fool Silliphant, clearly quite intoxicated, backs his cousin Mynton's view of the case by the cogent argument of a dice-box at Sir Richard's head,—and at once all is struggle, strife, and uproar. The other guests, young fellows of high fashion, now too much warmed with wine to remember their accustomed Mohican cold-bloodedness,—those happy debtors to the prowess of a Stultz, and walking advertisers of Nugee,—take eager part with the opposed belligerents: more than one decanter is sent hissing through the air; more than one bloody coxcomb

witnesses to the weight of a candlestick and its hurler's clever aim: uplifted chairs are made the weapons of the chivalric combatants; and along with divers other less distinguished victims in the melée, poor Sir John Vincent rushing into the midst, as a well-intentioned host, to quell the drunken brawl, gets knocked down among them all; the tables are upset, the bright gold runs about the room in all directions,—ha! no one heeds it,—no one owns it,—one little piece rolled right up to the window-sill where Roger still looked on with all his eyes; it is but to put his hand in,—the window is open to the floor,—nay, a finger is enough: greedily, one undecided moment, did he gaze upon the gold; he saw the hideous contrast of his own dim hovel and that radiant chamber,—he remembered the pining faces of his babes, and gentle Grace with all her hardships,—he thought upon his poverty and well deserts,—he looked upon wastefulness of wealth and wantonness of living,—these reflections struck him in a moment; no one saw him, no one cared about the gold;—that little blessed morsel that could do him so much good; all was confusion, all was opportunity, and who can wonder that his fingers closed upon the sovereign, and that he picked it up?

CHAPTER IV.

The Lost Theft.

STEALTHILY and quickly "honest Roger" crept away, for his conscience smote him on the instant: he felt he had done wrong; at any rate, the sovereign was not his,—and once the thought arose in him to run back and put it where he found it: but it was now become too precious in his sight, that little bit of gold, —and they, the rioters there, could not want it, might not even miss it; and then its righteous uses,—it should be well spent, even if ill-got: and thus, so many mitigations crowded in to excuse, if not to applaud, the action, that within a little while his warped mind had come to call the theft a godsend.

O Roger, Roger! alas for this false thought of that wrong deed! the poisonous gold has touched thy heart, and left on it a spot of cancer: the asp has bitten thee already, simple soul. This little seed will grow into a huge black pine, that shall darken for a while thy heaven, and dig its evil roots around thy happiness. Put it away, Roger, put it away: covet not unhallowed gold.

But Roger felt far otherwise; and this sudden qualm of conscience once quelled (I will say there seemed much of palliation in the matter), a kind of inebriate feeling of delight filled his mind, and Steady Acton plodded on to the meadow yonder half a mile a-head, in a species of delirious complacency. Here was luck indeed, filling up the promise of his dreams. His head was full of thoughts, pleasant holiday thoughts, of the many little useful things, the many small indulgences, that bit of gold should buy him. He would change it on the sly, and gradually bring the shillings home as extra pay for extra work; for, however much his wife might glory in the chance, and keep his secret, well he knew that Grace would have a world of things to say

about it, and he feared to tell his daughter of the deed. However, she should have a ribbon, so she should, good girl, and the pedlar shouldn't pass the door unbidden; Mary, too, might have a cotton kerchief, and the babes a doll and a rattle, and poor Thomas a shilling to spend as he liked; and so, in happy reverie, the kind father distributed his ill-got sovereign.

For a while he held it in his hand, as loth to part from the tangible possession of his treasure: but manual contact could not last all day, and, as he neared his scene of labor (—he came late after all, by the by, and lost the quarter-day, but it mattered little now—) he began to cogitate a place of safety; and carefully put it in his fob. Poor fellow,—he had never had enough to stow so well away before: his pockets had been thought quite trustworthy enough for any treasures hitherto: never had he used that fob for watch, or note, or gold,—and his predecessor in the cast-off garment had probably been quite aware how little that false fob was worthy of the name of savings' bank; it was in the situation of the Irishman's illimitable rope, with the end cut off. So while Roger was brewing up vast schemes of nascent wealth, and prosperous days at last, the filched sovereign, attracted by centripetal gravity, had found a passage downwards, and had straightway rolled into a crevice of mother earth, long before its "brief lord" had commenced his day's labor. Yes, it had been lost a good hour ere he found it out, for he had fancied that he had felt it there, and often did he feel, but his fancy was a button;—and, when he made the dread discovery, what a sting of momentary anguish, what a sickening fear, what an eager search! and, as the grim truth became more evident, that, indeed, beyond all remedy, his new-got, ill-got, egg of coming wealth was all clean gone, oh, this was wormwood, this was bitter as gall, and the strong man well nigh fainted. It was something sad to have done the ill,—but misery to have done it all for nothing: the sin was not altogether pleasant to his taste, but it was aloe itself to lose the reward. And when, pale and sick, leaning on his spade, he came to his old strength again, what was the reaction? Compunction at incipient crime, and gratitude to find its punishment so mercifully speedy, so lenient, so discriminative? I fear that if ever he had these thoughts at

all, he chased them wilfully away: his disappointment, far from being softened into patience, was sharpened to a feeling of re venge at fate: and all his hope now was—such another chance, gold, more gold, never mind how; more gold, he burnt for gold, he lusted after gold!

We must leave him for a time to his toil and his reflections, and touch another topic of our theme.

CHAPTER V.

The Inquest.

JUST a week before the baronet came of age, and a fortnight from the present time, an awful and mysterious event had happened at the Hall: the old house-keeper, Mrs. Quarles, had been found dead in her bed, under circumstances, to say the very least, of a black and suspicious appearance. The county Coroner had got a jury of the neighbors impanelled together; who, after sitting patiently on the inquest, and hearing, as well as seeing, the following evidence, could arrive at no verdict more specific than the obvious fact, that the poor old creature had been "found dead." The great question lay between apoplexy and murder: and the evidence tended to a well-matched conflict of opinions.

First, there lay the body, quietly in bed, tucked in tidily and undisturbed, with no marks of struggling, none whatever,—the clothes lay smooth, and the chamber orderly: yet the corpse's face was of a purple hue, the tongue swollen, the eyes starting from their sockets: it might, indeed, possibly have been an apoplectic seizure, which took her in her sleep, and killed her as she lay; *but* that the gripe of clutching fingers had left their livid seals upon the throat, and countenanced the dreadful thought of strangulation!

Secondly, a surgeon (one Mr. Eager, the Union doctor, a very young personage, wrong withal and radical) maintained that this actual strangulation might have been effected by the hands of the deceased herself, in the paroxysm of a rush of blood to the brain; and he fortified his wise position by the instance of a late Statesman, who, he averred, cut his throat with a pen-knife, to relieve himself of pressure on the temples: whilst another surgeon—(Stephen Cramp, he was farrier as well, and had been, until lately, time out of mind, the village Æsculapius, who looked

with scorn on his pert rival, and opposed him tooth and nail on all occasions), insisted that it was not only physically impossible for poor Mrs. Quarles so to have strangled herself, but more particularly that, if she had done so, she certainly could not have laid herself out so decently afterwards; therefore, that as some one else had kindly done the latter office for her, why not the former too?

Thirdly, Sarah Stack, the still-room maid, deposed, that Mrs. Quarles always locked her door before she went to bed, but that when she (deponent) went to call her as usual on the fatal morning, the door was just ajar; and so she found her dead: while parallel with this, tending to implicate some domestic criminal, was to be placed the equally uncommon fact, that the other door of Mrs. Quarles's room, leading to the lawn, was open too:—be it known that Mrs. Quarles was a stout woman, who couldn't abide to sleep up-stairs, for fear of fire; moreover, that she was a nervous woman, who took extraordinary precautions for her safety, in case of thieves. Thus, unaccountably enough, the murderer, if there was any, was as likely to have come from the outside, as from the in.

Fourthly, the murderer in this way is commonly a thief, and does the deed for mammon-sake; but the new house-keeper, lately installed, made her deposition, that, by inventories duly kept and entered,—for her honored predecessor, rest her soul, had been a pattern of regularity,—all Mrs. Quarles's goods and personal chattels were found to be safe and right in her room,—some silver spoons among them too, ay, and a silver tea-pot; while, as to other property in the house, with every room full of valuables, nothing whatever was missing from the lists, except, indeed, what was scarce worth mention (unless one must be very exact), sundry crocks and gallipots of honey, not forthcoming; these, however, it appeared probable that Mrs. Quarles had herself consumed in a certain mixture she nightly was accustomed to, of rum, horehound, and other matters sweetened up with honey, for her hoarseness. It seemed therefore clear she was not murdered for her property, nor by any one intending to have robbed the house.

Against this it was contended, and really with some show of reason, that as Mrs. Quarles was thought to have a hoard, always set her face against banks, railway shares, speculations, and investments, and seemed to have left nothing behind her but her clothes and so forth, it was still possible that the murderer who took the life, might have also been the thief to take the money.

Fifthly, Simon Jennings (butler indoors, bailiff out of doors, and general factotum everywhere to the Vincent interest, for he had managed to monopolize every place worth having, from the agent's book to the cellar-man's key), the said Simon deposed, that on the night in question he heard the house-dog barking furiously, and went out to quiet him; but found no thieves, nor knew any reason why the dog should have barked so much.

Now, the awkward matters in this deposition (if Mr. Jennings had not been entirely above suspicion,—the idea was quite absurd,—not to mention that he was nephew to the deceased, a great favorite with her, and a man altogether of the very strictest character), the awkward matters were these: the nearest way out to the dog, indeed the only way but casement windows on that side of the house, was through Mrs. Quarles's room: she had had the dog placed there for her special safety, as she slept on the ground floor; and it was not to be thought that Mr. Jennings could do so incorrect a thing as to pass through her room after bed-time, locked or unlocked,—indeed, when the question was delicately hinted to him, he was quite shocked at it,—quite shocked. But if he did not go that way, which way did he go? He deposed, indeed, and his testimony was noways to be doubted, that he went through the front door, and so round; which, under the circumstances, was at once a very brave and a very foolish thing to do; for it is, first, little wisdom to go round two sides of a square to quiet a dog, when one might have easily called to him from the men-servants' window; and secondly, albeit Mr. Jennings was a strict man, an upright man, shrewd withal, and calculating, no one had ever thought him capable of that Roman virtue, courage. Still, he had reluctantly confessed to this one heroic act, and it was a bold one, so let him take the credit of it,—mainly because—

Sixthly, Jonathan Floyd, footman, after having heard the dog bark at intervals, surely for more than a couple of hours, thought he might as well turn out of his snug berth for a minute, just to look out of the window and see what ailed the dog, or how many thieves were really breaking in. Well, as he looked, he fancied he saw a boat moving on the lake, but as there was no moon, he might have been mistaken.

By a Juryman: It might be a punt.

By another: He didn't know how many boats there were on the lake-side: they had a boat-house at the Hall, by the water's edge, and therefore he concluded something in it: really didn't know; might be a boat, might be a punt, might be both,—or neither.

By the Coroner: Could not swear which way it was moving; and, really, if put upon his Bible oath, wouldn't be positive about a boat at all, it was so dark, and he was so sleepy.

Not long afterwards, as the dog got still more violent, he turned his eyes from straining after shadows on the lake, to look at home, and then all at once noticed Mr. Jennings trying to quiet the noisy animal with the usual blandishments of "Good dog, good dog,—quiet, Don, quiet,—down, good dog,—down, Don, down!"

By a Juryman: He would swear to the words.

But Don would not hear of being quiet. After that, knowing all must be right if Mr. Jennings was about, he (deponent) turned in again, went to sleep, and thought no more of it till he heard of Mrs. Quarles's death in the morning. If he may be so bold as to speak his mind, he thinks the house-keeper being fat died o' the 'plexy in a nateral way, and that the dog barking so, just as she was a-going off, is proof positive of it. He'd often heard of dogs doing so; they saw the sperit gliding away, and barked at it; his (deponent's) own grand-mother—

At this juncture, for the Court was getting fidgetty, the Coroner cut short the opinions of Jonathan Floyd: and when Mr. Crown, summing up, presented in one focus all this evidence to the misty minds of the assembled Jurymen, it puzzled them entirely; they could not see their way, fairly addled, did not know at all what to make of it. On the threshold, there was no

proof it was a murder,—the Union doctor was loud and staunch on this; and next, there seemed to be no motive for the deed, and no one to suspect of it: so they left the matter open, found her simply "Dead," and troubled their heads no more about the business.

Good Mr. Evans, the vicar, preached her funeral sermon, only as last Sunday, amplifying the idea that she "was cut off in the midst of her days:" and thereby encouraging many of the simpler folk, who knew that Mrs. Quarles had long passed seventy, in the luminous notion that house-keepers in great establishments are privileged, amongst other undoubted perquisites, to live to a hundred and forty, unless cut off by apoplexy or murder.

Mr. Simon Jennings, as nephew and next of kin, followed the body to its last home in the capacity of chief mourner; to do him justice, he was a real mourner, bewailed her loudly, and had never been the same man since. Moreover, although aforetime not much given to indiscriminate charity, he had now gained no small credit by distributing his aunt's wardrobe among the poorer families at Hurstley. It was really very kind of him, and the more so, as being altogether unexpected: he got great praise for this, did Mr. Jennings; specially too, because he had gained nothing whatever from his aunt's death, though her heir and probable legatee, and clearly was a disappointed man.

CHAPTER VI.

The Bailiff; and a bitter Trial.

JENNINGS,—Mr. Simon Jennings,—for he prided himself much both on the Mr. and the Simon, was an upright man, a very upright man indeed, literally so as well as metaphorically. He was not tall certainly, but what there was of him stood bolt upright. Many fancied that his neck was possessed of some natural infirmity, or rather firmity, of unbendableness, some little-to be-envied property of being a perpetual stiff-neck; and they were the more countenanced in this theory, from the fact that, within a few days past, Mr. Jennings had contracted an ugly knack of carrying his erect head in the comfortless position of peeping over his left shoulder; not always so, indeed, but often enough to be remarkable; and then he would occasionally start it straight again, eyes right, with a nervous twitch, anything but pleasant to the marvelling spectator. It was as if he was momentarily expecting to look upon some vague object that affrighted him, and sometimes really did see it. Mr. Jennings had consulted high medical authority (as Hurstley judged), to wit, the Union doctor of last scene, an enterprising practitioner, glib in theory and bold in practice,—and it had been mutually agreed between them that "stomach" was the cause of these unhandsome symptoms; acridity of the gastric juice, consequent indigestion and spasm, and generally a hypochondriacal habit of body. Mr. Jennings must take certain draughts thrice a day, be very careful of his diet, and keep his mind at ease. As to Simon himself, he was, poor man, much to be pitied in this ideal visitation, for, though his looks confessed that he saw, or fancied he saw, a something, he declared himself wholly at a loss to explain what that something was: moreover, contrary to former habits of an ostentatious boldness, he seemed meekly to shrink

from observation; and, as he piously acquiesced in the annoyance, would observe that his unpleasant jerking was "a little matter after all, and that, no doubt, the will of Providence."

Independently of these new grimaces, Simon's appearance was little in his favor: not that his small dimensions signified,—Cæsar, and Buonaparte, and Wellington, and Nelson, all were little men: not that his dress was other than respectable—black coat and waistcoat, white stiff cravat, grey trowsers somewhat shrunk in longitude, good serviceable shoe leather (of the shape, if not also of the size, of river barges), and plenty of unbleached cotton stocking about the gnarled region of his ankles. All this was well enough; nature was beholden to that charity of art, which hides a multitude of failings; but the face, where native man looks forth in all his unadornment, that it was which so seldom prepossessed the many who had never heard of Jennings's strict character and stern integrity. The face was a sallow face, peaked towards the nose, with head and chin receding; lit withal by small protrusive eyes, so constructed, that the whites all round were generally visible, giving them a strange and staring look; elevated eyebrows; not an inch of whisker, but all shaved sore right up to the large and prominent ear; and lank black hair, not much of it, scantily thatching all smooth. Then his arms, oscillating as he walked (as if the pendulum by which that rigid man was made to go his regular routine), were much too long for symmetry: and altogether, to casual view, Mr. Jennings must acknowledge to a supercilious yet sneaking air,—which charity has ere now been kind enough to think a conscious rectitude towards man, and a soft-going humility with God.

When the bailiff takes his round about the property, as we see him now, he is mounted,—to say he rides would convey far too equestrian a notion,—he is mounted on a rough-coated, quiet, old, white shooting-pony; the saddle strangely girded on with many bands about the belly, the stirrups astonishingly short, and straps never called upon to diminish that long whity-brown interval between shoe and trowser: Mr. Jennings sits his steed with nose aloft, and a high perch in the general, somewhat loosely, and, had the pony been a Bucephalus rather than a

Rozinante, not a little perilously. Simon is jogging hitherwards toward Roger Acton, as he digs the land-drain across this marshy meadow: let us see how it fares now with our poor hero.

Occupation, yes, duteous occupation, has exerted its wholesome influences, and thank God! Roger is himself again. He has been very sorry half the day both for the wicked feelings of the morning, and that still more wicked theft,—a bad business altogether, he cannot bear to think of it; the gold was none of his, whosesoever it might be,—he ought not to have touched it,—vexed he did, but cannot help it now; it is well he lost it too, for ill-got money never came to any good: though to be sure, if he could only get it honestly, money would make a man of him.

I am not sure of that, Roger, it may be so sometimes; but, in my judgment, money has unmade more men than made them.

"How now, Acton, is not this drain dug yet! You have been about it much too long, sir; I shall fine you for this."

"Please you, Muster Jennings, I 've stuck to it pretty tightly too, barring that I make to-day three-quarters, being late: but it 's heavy clay, you see, Mr. Simon—wet above and iron-hard below: it shall all be ready by to-morrow, Mr. Simon."

Whether the "Mr. Simon" had its softening influence, or any other considerations lent their soothing aid, we shall see presently; for the bailiff added, in a tone unusually indulgent,

"Well, Roger, see it is done, and well done; and now I have just another word to say to you: his honor is coming round this way, and if he asks you any questions, remember to be sure and tell him this,—you have got a comfortable cottage, very comfortable, just repaired, you want for nothing, and are earning twelve shillings a week."

"God help me, Muster Jennings; why my wages are but eight, and my hovel scarcely better than a pig-pound."

"Look you, Acton; tell Sir John what you have told me, and you are a ruined man. Make it twelve to his honor, as others shall do: who knows," he added, half-coaxing, half-soliloquising, "perhaps his honor may really make it twelve instead of eight."

"Oh, Muster Jennings, and who gets the odd four?"

"What, man! do you dare to ask me that? Remember, sir, at your peril, that you, and all the rest, *have had* twelve shillings

a-week wages whenever you have worked on this estate:—not a word!—and that, if you dare to speak or even think to the contrary, you never earn a penny here again. But here comes John Vincent, my master, as I, Simon Jennings, am yours. Be careful what you say to him."

Sir John Devereux Vincent, after a long minority, had at length shaken off his guardians, and become master of his own doings, and of Hurstley Hall. The property was in pretty decent order, and funds had accumulated vastly: all this notwithstanding a thousand peculations, and the suspicious incident that one of the guardians was a "highly respectable" solicitor. Sir John, like most new brooms, had with the best intentions resolved upon sweeping measures of great good; especially also upon doing a great deal with his own eyes and ears; but like as aforesaid, he was permitted neither to hear nor see any truths at all. Just now, the usual night's work took him a little off the hooks, and we must make allowances; really, too, he was by far the soberest of all those choice spirits, and drank and played as little as he could; and even, under existing disadvantages, he managed by four o'clock post meridiem to inspect a certain portion of the estate duly every day, under the prudential guidance of his bailiff Jennings. There, that good-looking tall young fellow on the blood mare just cantering up to us is Sir John; the other two are a couple of the gallant youths now feasting at the Hall: ay, two of the fiercest foes in last night's broil. Those heated little matters are easily got over.

"Hollo, Jennings, what the devil made you give that start? you couldn't look more horrified if ghosts were at your elbow: why, your face is the picture of death; look another way, man, do, or my mare will bolt."

"I beg your pardon, Sir John, but the spasm took me: it is my infirmity; forgive it. This meadow, you perceive, Sir John, requires drainage, and afterwards I propose to dress it with free chalk to sweeten the grass. Next field, you will take notice, the guano—"

"Well, well,—Jennings,—and that poor fellow there up to his knees in mud, is he pretty tolerably off now?"

"Oh, your honor," said the bailiff, with a knowing look, "I

only wish that half the little farmers hereabouts were as well to do as he is: a pretty cottage, Sir John, half an acre of garden, and twelve shillings a-week, is pretty middling for a single man."

"Aha,—is it?—well; but the poor devil looks wretched enough too,—I will just ask him if he wants anything now."

"Don't, Sir John, pray don't; pray permit me to advise your honor: these men are always wanting. 'Acton's cottage' is a proverb; and Roger there can want for nothing honestly; nevertheless, as I know your honor's good heart, and wish to make all happy, if you will suffer me to see to it myself—"

"Certainly, Jennings, do, do by all means, and thank you: here, just to make a beginning, as we 're all so jolly at the Hall, and that poor fellow's up to his neck in mud, give him this from me to drink my health with."

Acton, who had dutifully held aloof, and kept on digging steadily, was still quite near enough to hear all this; at the magical word "give" he looked up hurriedly, and saw Sir John Vincent toss a piece of go'd,—yes, on his dying oath, a bright new sovereign—to Simon Jennings: O blessed vision, and gold was to be his at last!

"Come along, Mynton; Hunt, now mind you try and lame that big beast of a rawboned charger among these gutters, will you? I'm off, Jennings; meet me, do you hear, at the Croft to-mor—"

So the three friends galloped away; and John Vincent really felt more light-hearted and happy than at any time the week past, for having so properly got rid of a welcome bit of gold.

"Roger Acton; come up here, sir, out of that ditch: his honor has been liberal enough to give you a shilling to drink his health with."

"A shilling, Muster Jennings?" said the poor astonished man; "why I'll make oath it was a pound; I saw it myself. Come, Muster Jennings, don't break jokes upon a poor man's back."

"Jokes, Acton?—sticks, sir, if you say another word: take John Vincent's shilling."

"Oh, sir!" cried Roger, quite unmanned at this most cruel disappointment; "be merciful—be generous—give me my gold, my own bit of gold. I'll swear his honor gave it for me; blessings

on his head! You know he did, Mr. Simon; don't play upon me."

"Play upon you?—generous—your gold—what is it you mean, man? We'll have no madmen about us, I can tell you; take the shilling, or else—"

"'Rob not the poor, because he is poor, for the Lord shall plead his cause,'" was the solemn answer.

"Roger Acton,"—the bailiff gave a scared start, as usual, and, recovering himself, looked both white and stern; "you have dared to quote the Bible against me: deeply shall you rue it. Begone, man; your work on this estate is at an end."

CHAPTER VII.

Wrongs and Ruin.

A VERY miserable man was Roger Acton now, for this last trial was the worst of all. The vapors of his discontent had almost passed away—that bright pernicious dream was being rapidly forgotten—the morning's ill-got coin, "thank the Lord, it was lost as soon as found," and penitence had washed away that blot upon his soul; but here, an honest pound, liberally bestowed by his hereditary landlord—his own bright bit of gold—the only bit but one he ever had (and how different in innocence from that one!)—a seeming sugar-drop of kindness, shed by the rich heavens on his cup of poverty, to have this meanly filched away by a grasping, grinding task-master, oh, was it not a bitter trial? What affliction as to this world's wealth can a man meet worse than this?

Acton's first impulse was to run to the Hall, and ask to see Sir John:—"Out; won't be back till seven, and then can see nobody; the baronet will be dressing for dinner, and mustn't be disturbed." Then he made a vain effort to speak with Mr. Jennings, and plead with him: yes, even on his knees, if must be. Mr. Simon could not be so bad; perhaps it was a long joke after all—the bailiff always had a queer way with him. Or, if indeed the man meant robbery, loudly to threaten him, that all might hear, to bring the house about his ears, and force justice, if he could not fawn it. But both these conflicting expedients were vetoed. Jonathan Floyd, who took in Acton's meek message of "humbly craved leave to speak with Master Jennings," came back with the inexplicable mandate, "Warn Roger Acton from the premises." So, he must needs bide till to-morrow morning, when, come what might, he resolved to see his honor, and set some truths before him.

Acton was not the only man on the estate who knew that he had a landlord, generous, not to say prodigal, a warm-hearted, well-intentioned master, whose mere youth a career of sensuality had not yet hardened, nor a course of dissipation been prolonged enough to distort his feelings from the right. And Acton, moreover, was not the only man who wondered how, with such a landlord (ay, and the guardians before him were always well-spoken gentle-folks, kindly in their manners, and liberal in their looks), wages could be kept so low, and rents so high, and indulgences so few, and penalties so many. There were fines for everything, and no allowances of hedgebote, or housebote, or any other time-honored right; the very peat on the common must be paid for, and if a child picked a bit of faggot the father was mulcted in a shilling. Mr. Jennings did all this, and always pleaded his employers' orders; nay, if any grumbled, as men would now and then, he would affect to think it strange, that the gentlemen guardians, with the landlord at their head, could be so hard upon the poor: he would not be so, credit him, if he had been born a gentleman, but the bailiff, men, must obey orders, like the rest of you; these are hard times for Hurstley, he would say, and we must all rub over them as best we can. According to Simon, it was as much as his own place was worth to remit one single penny of a fine, or make the least indulgence for calamity; whilst, as to lowering a cotter's rent, or raising a ditcher's wages, he dared not do it for his life; folks must not blame him, but look to the landlord.

Now, all this, in the long absence of any definite resident master at the Hall, sounded reasonable, if true; and Mr. Jennings punctually paid, however bad the terms; so the poor men bode their time, and looked for better days. And the days long-looked-for now were come; but were they any better? The baronet, indeed, seemed bent upon inquiry, reform, redress; but, as he never went without the right-hand man, his endeavors were always unsuccessful. At first it would appear that the bailiff had gone upon his old plan, shrugging up his shoulders to the men at the master's meanness, while he praised to the landlord the condition of his tenants; but this could not long deceive, so he turned instanter on another tack; he assumed the

despot, issuing authoritative edicts which no one dared to disobey; he made the laborer hide his needs, and intercepted at its source the lord's benevolence; he began to be found out, so the bolder spirits said, in filching with both hands from man and master; and, to the mind of more than one shrewd observer, was playing the unjust steward to admiration.

But stop: let us hear the other side; it is possible we may have been mistaken. Bailiffs are never popular, particularly if they are too honest, and this one is a stern man with a repulsive manner. Who knows whether his advice to Acton may not have been wise and kind, and would not have conduced to a general rise of wages? Who can prove, nay, venture to insinuate, any such systematic roguery against a man hitherto so strict, so punctual, so sanctimonious? Even in the case of Sir John's golden gift, Jennings may be right after all; it is quite possible that Roger was mistaken, and had gilt a piece of silver with his longings; and the upright man might well take umbrage at so vile an imputation as that hot and silly speech; it was foolish, very foolish, to have quoted text against him, and no wonder that the laborer got dismissed for it. Then again to return to wages,—who knows? it might be, all things considered, the only way of managing a rise; the bailiff must know his master's mind best, and Acton had been wise to have done as he bade him; perhaps it really was well-meant, and might have got him twelve shillings a-week instead of eight as hitherto; perhaps Simon was a shrewd man, and arranged it cleverly; perhaps Roger was an honest man, and couldn't but think others so.

Any how, though, all was lost now, and he blamed his own rash tongue, poor fellow, for what he could not help fearing was the ruin of himself and all he loved. With a melancholy heart, he shouldered his spade, and slowly plodded homewards. How long should he have a home? How was he to get bread, to get work, if the bailiff was his enemy? How could he face his wife, and tell her all the foolish past and dreadful future? How could he bear to look on Grace, too beautiful Grace, and torture his heart by fancying her fate? Thomas, too, his own brave boy, whom utter poverty might drive to desperation?

And the poor babes, his little playful pets, what on earth would become of them? There was the Union workhouse to be sure, but Acton shuddered at the thought; to be separated from everything he loved, to give up his little all, and be made both a prisoner and a slave, all for the sake of what?—daily water-gruel, and a pauper's branded livery. Or they might perchance go beyond the seas, if some Prince Edward's Company would help him and his to emigrate; ay, thought he, and run new risks, encounter fresh dangers, lose everything, get nothing, and all the trouble taken merely to starve three thousand miles from home. No, no, at his time of life, he could not be leaving for ever old friends, old habits, old fields, old home, old neighborhood,—where he had seen the saplings grow up trees, and the quick toppings change into a ten-foot hedge; where the very cattle knew his step, and the clods broke kindly to his ploughshare; and more than all, the dear old church, where his forefathers had worshipped from the Conquest, and the old mounds where they slept, and, and, and,—that one precious grave of his dear lost Annie,—could he leave it? Oh God, no! he had done no ill, he had committed no crime,—why should he prefer the convict's doom, and seek to be transported for life?

A miserable walk home was that, and full of wretched thoughts. Poor Roger Acton, tossed by much trouble, vexed with sore oppression, I wish that you had prayed in your distress; stop, he did pray, and that vehemently; but it was not for help, or guidance, or patience, or consolation,—he only prayed for gold.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Covetous Dream.

ONCE at home, the sad truth soon was told. Roger's look alone spoke of some calamity, and he had but little heart or hope to keep the matter secret. True he said not a word about the early morning's sin; why should he? He had been punished for it, and he had repented; let him be humbled before God, but not confess to man. However, all about the bailiff, and the landlord, and the thieved gift, and the sudden dismissal, the sure ruin, the dismal wayside plans, and fears, and dark alternatives without one hope in any—these did poor Acton fluently pour forth with a broken-hearted eloquence; to these Grace listened sorrowfully, with a face full of gentle trust in God's blessing on the morrow's interview; these Mary, the wife, heard to an end, with—no storm of execration on ill-fortune, no ebullition of unjust rage against a fool of a husband, no vexing sneers, no selfish apprehensions. Far from it; there really was one unlooked-for blessing come already to console poor Roger; and no little compensation for his trouble was the way his wife received the news. He, unlucky man, had expected something little short of a virago's talons, and a beldame's curse; he had experienced on less occasions something of the sort before; but now that real affliction stood upon the hearth, Mary Acton's character rose with the emergency, and she greeted her ruined husband with a kindness towards him, a solemn indignation against those who grind the poor, and a sober courage to confront evil, which he little had imagined.

"Bear up, Roger; here, goodman, take the child, and don't look quite so downcast; come what may, I'll share your cares, and you shall halve my pleasures; we will fight it out together."

Moreover, cross, and fidgetty, and scolding, as Mary had been ever heretofore, to her meek stepdaughter Grace, all at once, as if just to disappoint any preconcerted theory, now that actual calamity was come, she turned to be a kind good mother to her. Roger and his daughter could scarcely believe their ears.

"Grace, dear, I know you're a sensible good girl, try and cheer your father." And then the stepdame added,

"There now, just run up, fetch your Prayer-book down, and read a little to us all to do us good,"—the fair affectionate girl, unused to the accents of kindness, could not forbear flinging her arms round Mary Acton's neck, and loving her, as Ruth loved Naomi.

Then with a heavenly smile upon her face, and a happy heart within her to keep the smile alight, her gentle voice read these words,—it will do us good to read them too :—

"Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice.
O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint.
If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it?
Because there is mercy with thee,—therefore shalt thou be feared.
I look for the Lord, my soul doth wait for him: in his word is my trust.
My soul fleeth unto the Lord, before the morning watch—before the morning watch.
O Israel, trust in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy: and with him is plenteous redemption.
And he shall redeem Israel from all his sins."

"Isn't the last word 'troubles,' child? look again; I think it 's 'troubles' either there, or leastways in the Bible-psalm."

"No, father, sins, 'from all his sins;' and 'iniquities' in the Bible-version, look, father."

"Well, girl, well; I wish it had been 'troubles;' 'from all his troubles' is a better thought to my mind: God wot, I have plenty on 'em, and a little lot of gold would save us from them all."

"Gold, father? no, my father, God."

"I tell you, child," said Roger, ever vacillating in his strong temptation between habitual religion and the new-caught lust of money, "if only on a sudden I could get gold by hook or by

crook, all my cares and all your troubles would be over on the instant."

"Oh, dear father, do not hope so; and do not think of troubles more than sins: there is no deliverance in Mammon; riches profit not in the day of evil, and ill-got wealth tends to worse than poverty."

"Well, anyhow, I only wish that dream of mine came true."

"Dream, goodman,—what dream?" said his wife.

"Why, Poll, I dreamt I was a-working in my garden, hard by the celery trenches in the sedge; and I was moaning at my lot, as well I may: and a sort of angel came to me, only he looked dark and sorrowful, and kindly said, 'What would you have, Roger?' I, nothing fearful in my dream for all the strangeness of his winged presence, answered boldly, 'money;' he pointed with his finger, laughed aloud, and vanished away: and, as for me, I thought a minute wonderingly, turned to look where he had pointed, and, O the blessing! found a crock of gold!"

"Hush, father! that dark angel was the devil; he has dropt ill thoughts upon your heart: I would I could see you as you used to be, dear father, till within these two days."

"Whoever he were, if he brought me gold, he would bring me blessing. There's meat and drink, and warmth and shelter, in the yellow gold,—ay, and rest from labor, child, and a power of rare good gifts."

"If God had made them good, and the gold were honest gains, still, father, even so, you forget righteousness, and happiness, and wisdom. Money gives us none of these, but it might take them all away: dear father, let your loving Grace ask you, have you been better, happier, wiser, even from the wishing it so much?"

"Daughter, daughter, I tell you plainly, he that gives me gold gives me all things: I wish I found the crock the de— the angel, I mean, brought me."

"O father," murmured Grace, "do not breathe the wicked wish; even if you found it without any evil angel's help, would the gold be rightfully your own?"

"Tush, girl!" said her mother; "get the gold, feed the children, and then to think about the right."

"Ay, Grace, first drive away the toils and troubles of this life," added Roger, "and then one may try with a free mind to discover the comforts of religion."

Poor Grace only looked up mournfully, and answered nothing.

CHAPTER IX.

The Poacher.

A SUDDEN knock at the door here startled the whole party, and Mary Acton, bustling up, drew the bolt, to let in,—first, a lurcher, one Rover to wit, our gaunt ember-loving friend of Chapter II.; secondly, Thomas Acton, full flush, who carried the old musket on his shoulder, and seemed to have something else under his smock; and thirdly, Ben Burke, a personage of no small consequence to us, and who therefore deserves some specific introduction.

Big Ben, otherwise Black Burke, according to the friendship or the enmity of those who named him, was a huge, rough, loud, good-humored, dare-devil sort of an individual, who lived upon what he considered common rights. His dress was of the mongrel character, a well-imagined cross between a ploughman's and a sailor's; the bottle-green frock of the former, pattern-stitched about the neck as ingeniously as if a tribe of Wisconsin squaws had tailored it,—and mighty fishing boots, vast as any French postilion's, acting as a triton's tail to symbolize the latter: a red cotton handkerchief (dirty-red of course, as all things else were dirty, for cleanliness had little part in Ben), occupied just now the more native region of a halter; and a rusty fur cap crowned the poacher; I repeat it,—crowned the poacher; for in his own estimation, and that of many others too, Ben was, if not quite an emperor, at least an Agamemnon, a king of men, a natural human monarch; in truth, he felt as much pride in the title Burke the Poacher (and with as great justice, too, for aught I know), as Ali-Hamet-Ghee-the-Thug eastwards, or William-of-Normandy-the-Conqueror westwards, may be thought respectively to have cherished, on the score of their murderous and thievish surnames.

There was no small good, after all, in poor Ben; and a mountain of allowance must be flung into the scales to counterbalance his deficiencies. However coarse, and even profane, in his talk (I hope the gentle reader will excuse me alike for eliding a few elegant extracts from his common conversation, and also for reminding him characteristically, now and then, that Ben's language is not entirely Addisonian), however rough of tongue and dissonant in voice, Ben's heart will be found much about in the right place; nay, I verily believe it has more of natural justice, human kindness, and right sympathies in it, than are to be found in many of those hard and hollow cones that beat beneath the twenty guinea waistcoats of a Burghardt or a Buckmaster. Ay, give me the fluttering inhabitant of Ben Burke's cowskin vest; it is worth a thousand of those stuffed and artificial denizens, whose usual nest is figured satin and cut velvet.

Ben stole—true—he did not deny it; but he stole naught but what he fancied was wrongfully withheld him: and, if he took from the rich, who scarcely knew he robbed them, he shared his savory booty with the poor, and fed them by his daring. Like Robin Hood of old, he avenged himself on wanton wealth, and frequently redressed by it the wrongs of penury. Not that I intend to break a lance for either of them, nor to go any lengths in excusing; slight extenuation is the limit for prudent advocacy in these cases. Robin Hood and Benjamin Burke were both of them thieves; bold men; bad men, if any will insist upon the bad; they sinned against law, and order, and Providence; they dug rudely at the roots of social institutions; they spoke and acted in a dangerous fashion about rights of men and community of things. But set aside the statutes of Foresting and Venery, disfranchise pheasants, let it be a cogent thing that poverty and riches approach the golden mean somewhat less unequally, and we shall not find much of criminality, either in Ben or Robin.

For a general idea, then, of our poaching friend:—he is a gigantic, black-whiskered, humorous, ruddy mortal, full of strange oaths, which we really must not print, and bearded like the pard, and he tumbles in amongst our humble family party, with—

"Bless your honest heart, Roger; what makes you look so sodden? I'm a lord, if your eyes a'n't as red as a hedge-hog's; and all the rest o' you, too; why, you seem to be pretty well merry as mutes. Ha! I see what it is," added Ben, pouring forth a benediction on their frugal supper; "it's that precious belly-ache porridge that's a giving you all the 'flensy. Tip it down the sink, dame, will you now, and trust to me for better. Your Tom here, Roger, 's a lad o' mettle, that he is; ay, and that old iron o' yours as true as a compass; and the pheasants would come to it, all the same as if they 'd been loadstoned. Here, dame, pluck the fowl, will you: drop 'em, Tom."

And Thomas Acton flung upon the table a couple of fine cock pheasants.

Roger, Mary, and Grace, who were well accustomed to Ben Burke's eloquent tirades, heard the end of this one with anxiety and silence; for Tom had never done the like before. Grace was first to expostulate, but was at once cut short by an oath from her brother, whose evident state of high excitement could not brook the semblance of reproof. Mary Acton's marketing glance was abstractedly fixed upon the actual corpus delicti; each fine plump bird, full-plumaged, young-spurred; yes, they were still warm, and would eat tender, so she mechanically began to pluck them; while, as for poor downcast Roger, he remembered, with a conscience-sting that almost made him start, his stolen bit of money in the morning—so, how could he condemn? He only looked pityingly on Thomas, and sighed from the bottom of his heart.

"Why, what's the matter now?" roared Ben; "one 'ud think we was bailiffs come to raise the rent, 'stead of son Tom and friendly Ben; hang it, mun, we aint here to cheat you out o' summut—no, not out o' peace o' mind neither; so, if you don't like luck, burn the fowls, or bury 'em, and let brave Tom risk limbo for nothing."

"Oh, Ben!" murmured Grace, "why will you lead him astray? Oh, brother! brother! what have you done?" she said, sorrowfully.

"Miss Grace;" her beauty always awed the poacher, and his rugged Caliban spirit bowed in reverence before her Ariel soul;

"I wish I was as good as you, but can't be: don't condemn us, Grace; leastways, first hear me, and then say where 's the harm or sin on it. Twelve hundred head o' game—I heard John Gorse, the keeper, tell it at the Jerry—twelve hundred head were shot at t' other day's battew: Sir John—no blame to him for it—killed a couple o' hundred to his own gun; and though they sent away a coachful, and gave to all who asked, and feasted themselves chuckfull, and fed the cats, and all, still a mound, like a haycock, o' them fine fat fowl rotted in a mass, and were flung upon the dungpit. Now, Miss Grace, that 'ere salt pea-porridge a'n't nice, a'n't wholesome; and, bless your pretty mouth, it ought to feed more sweetly. Look at Acton, isn't he half-starved? Is Tom, brave boy, full o' the fat o' the land? Who made fowl, I should like to know, and us to eat 'em? And where 's the harm or sin in bringing down a bird? No, Miss, them ere beaks, dammem (beg humble pardon, Miss, indeed I won't again),—them ere justices, as they call themselves, makes hard laws to hedge about their own pleasures; and if the poor man starves, he starves; but if he stays his hunger with the free, wild birds of heaven, they prison him and punish him, and call him Poacher."

"Ben, those who make the laws, do so under God's permission; and they who break man's law, break His law."

"Nonsense, child,"—suddenly said Roger; "hold your silly tongue. Do you mean to tell us, God's law and man's law are the same thing! No, Grace, I can't stomach that; God makes right, and man makes might—riches go one way, and poor men's wrongs another. Money, money's the great law-maker, and a full purse frees him that has it, while it turns the jailor's key on the wretch that has it not: one of those wretches is the hopeless Roger Acton. Well, well," he added, after a despondent sigh; "say no more about it all; that's right, good-wife—why, they do look plump. And if I can't stomach Grace's text-talk there, I'm sure I can the birds; for I know what keeps crying cupboard lustily."

It was a faint effort to be gay, and it only showed his gloom the denser. Truly, he has quite enough to make him sad; but this is an unhealthy sadness: the mists of mammon-worship, rising

up, meet in the mid æther of his mind these lowering clouds of discontent: and the seeming calamity, that should be but a trial to his faith, looks too likely to wreck it.

So, then, the embers were raked up, the trivet stuck a-top, the savory broil made ready; and (all but Grace, who would not taste a morsel, but went up straight to bed) never had the Actons yet sate down before so rich a supper.

CHAPTER X.

Ben Burke's Strange Adventure.

"TAKE a pull, Roger, and pass the flask," was the cordial prescription of Ben Burke, intended to cure a dead silence generated equally of eager appetites and self-accusing consciences, so saying, he produced a quart wicker-bottle, which enshrined, according to his testimony, "summut short, the right stuff, stinging strong, that had never seen the face of a wishy-washy 'ciseman." But Roger touched it sparingly, for the vaunted nectar positively burnt his swallow; till Ben, pulling at it heartily himself, by way of giving moral precept the full benefit of a good example, taught Roger not to be afraid of it, and so the flask was drained.

Under such communicative influence, Acton's tale of sorrows and oppressions, we may readily believe, was soon made known; and as readily, that it moved Ben's indignant and gigantic sympathies to an extent of imprecation on the eyes, timbers, and psychological existence of Mr. Jennings, very little edifying. One thing, however, made amends for the license of his tongue; the evident sincerity and warmth, with which his coarse but kindly nature proffered instant aid, both offensive and defensive.

"It's a black and burning shame, Honest Roger, and right shall have his own, somehow, while Big Ben has a heart in the old place, and a hand to help his friend." And the poacher having dealt his own broad breast a blow that would have knocked a tailor down, stretched out to Acton the huge hand that had inflicted it.

"More than that, Roger,—hark to this, man!" and, as he slapped his breeches pocket, there was the chink as of a mine of money shaken to its foundations: "hark to this, man! and more than hark, have: here, good wife, hold your apron." And he flung into her lap a handful of silver!

Roger gave a sudden shout of wonder, joy, and avarice: and then as instantaneously turning very pale, he slowly muttered, "Hush, Ben! is it bloody money?" and almost shrieked as he added, "and my poor boy Tom too, with you! God-a-mercy, mun! how came ye by it?"

"Honestly, neighbor, leastways, middling honest: don't damp a good fellow's heart, when he means to serve you."

"Tell me only that my boy is innocent!—and the money,—yes, yes, I'll keep the money:" for his wife seemed to be pushing it from her at the thought.

"I innocent, father? I never know'd till this minute that Ben had any blunt at all,—did I, Ben?—and I only brought him and Rover here to sup, because I thought it neighborly and kindlike."

Poor Tom had till now been very silent: somehow the pheasants lay heavy on his stomach.

"Is it true, Ben, is it true? the lad isn't a thief, the lad isn't a murderer? Oh God! Burke, tell me truth."

"Blockhead!" was the courteous reply, "what, not believe your own son? Why, neighbor Acton, look at the boy: would that frank-faced, open-hearted fellow do worse, think you, than Black Burke? And would I, bad as I be, turn the bloody villain to take man's life? No, neighbor, Ben kills game, not keepers: he sets his wire for a hare, but wouldn't go to pick a dead man's pocket. All that's wrong in me, mun, the game-laws put there; but I'm neither burglar, murderer, highwayman, no, nor a mean sneaking thief; however the quality may think so, and even wish to drive me to it. Neither, being as I be no rogue, could I bear to live a fool; but I should be one, neighbor, and dub myself one too, if I didn't stoop to pick up money that a madman flings away."

"Madman? pick up money? tell us how it was, Ben," interposed female curiosity.

"Well, neighbors, listen: I was a-setting my night-lines round Pike Island yonder, more nor a fortnight back; it was a dark night and a mizzling, or morning rather, 'twixt three and four; by the same token, I'd caught a power of eels. All at once, whilst I was fixing a trimmer, a punt came quietly up: as for

me, Roger, you know I always wades it through the muddy shallow: well, I listens, and a chap creeps ashore,—a mad chap, with never a tile to his head, nor a sole to his feet,—and when I sings out to him to ax his business, the lunatic sprung at me like a tiger: I didn't wish to hurt a little weak wretch like him, specially being past all sense, poor nat'ral, so I shook him off at once, and held him straight out in this here wice." [Ben's grasp could have cracked any cocoa-nut.] "He trembled like a wicked thing; and when I peered close into his face, blow me but I thought I'd hooked a white devil,—no one ever see such a face: it was horrible to look at. 'What are you arter, mun?' says I; 'burying a dead babby?' says I. 'Give us hold here,—I'm blest if I don't see though what you've got buckled up there.' With that, the little white fool,—it's sartin he was mad,—all on a sudden flings at my head a precious hard bundle, gives a horrid howl, jumps into the punt, and off again, afore I could wink twice. My head a'n't a soft un, I suppose; but when a lunatic chap hurls at it with all his might a barrow-load of crockery at once, it's little wonder that my right eye flinched a minute, and that my right hand rubbed my right eye; and so he freed himself and got clear off. Rum start this, thinks I: but anyhow he's flung away a summut, and means to give it me: what can it be? thinks I. Well, neighbors, if I didn't know the chap was mad afore, I was sartin of it now; what do you think of a grown man,—little enough, truly, but out of long coats too,—sneaking by night to Pike Island, to count out a little lot of silver, and to guzzle twelve gallipots o' honey?—There it was, all hashed up in an old shawl, a slimy mesh like birdlime: no wonder my eye was a leetle blackish, when half-a-dozen earthen crocks were broken against it. I was angered enough, I tell you, to think any man could be such a fool as to bring honey there to eat, or to hide,—when at once I spied summut red among the mess; and what should it be but a pretty little China house, red-bricklike, with a split in the roof for droppings, and ticketed 'Savings-bank:' the chink o' that bank you hears now: and the bank itself is in the pond, now I've cleaned the till out."

"Wonderful sure! But what did you do with the honey, Ben?—some of the pots wasn't broke," urged notable Mrs. Acton.

"Oh, burn the slimy stuff, I warn't going to put my mouth out o' taste o' bacca, for a whole jawful of toothaches: I'll tell you, dame, what I did with them ere crocks, wholes and parts. There's never a stone on Pike Island, it's too swampy, and I'd forgot to bring my pocketful, as usual. The heaviest fish, look you, always lie among the sedge, hereabouts and thereabouts, and need stirring, as your Tom knows well; so I chucked the gallipots fur from me, right and left, into the shallows, and thereby druv the pike upon my hooks. A good night's work I made of it too, say nothing of the Savings-bank; forty pound o' pike and twelve of eel warn't bad pickings."

"Dear, it was a pity though to fling away the honey; but what became of the shawl, Ben?" Perhaps Mrs. Acton thought of looking for it.

"Oh, as for that, I was minded to have sunk it, with its mess of sweetmeats and potsherds; but a thought took me, dame, to be 'conomical for once; and I was half sorry too that I'd flung away the jars, for I began to fancy your little uns might ha' liked the stuff; so I dipped the clout like any washerwoman, rinshed, and squeezed, and washed the mess away, and have worn it round my waist ever since; here, dame, I haven't been this way for a while afore to-night; but I meant to ask you if you'd like to have it; may be 'tan't the fashion though."

"Good gracious, Ben, why that's Mrs. Quarles's shawl, I'd swear to it among a hundred; Sarah Stack, at the Hall, once took and wore it, when Mrs. Quarles was ill abed, and she and our Thomas walked to church together. Yes,—green, edged with red, and—I thought so,—a yellow circle in the middle; here's B. Q. for Bridget Quarles, in black cotton at the corner. Lackapity! if they'd heard of all this at the Inquest! I tell you what, Big Ben, it's kindly meant of you, and so thank you heartily, but that shawl would bring us into trouble; so please take it yourself to the Hall, and tell 'em fairly how you came by it."

"I don't know about that, Poll Acton; perhaps they might ask me for the Savings-bank, too,—eh, Roger!"

"No, wife, no, it 'll never do to lose the money! let a bygone be a bygone, and don't disturb the old woman in her grave. As

to the shawl, if it's like to be a tell-tale, in my mind, this hearth 's the safest place for it."

So he flung it on the fire; there was a shrivelling, smouldering, guilty sort of blaze, and the shawl was burnt.

Roger Acton, you are falling quickly as a shooting star; already is your conscience warped to connive, for lucre's sake, at some one's secret crimes. You had better, for the moral of the matter, have burnt your right hand, as Scævola did, than that shawl. Beware, your sin will bring its punishment.

CHAPTER XI.

Sleep.

GRACE, in her humble truckle-bed, lay praying for her father; not about his trouble, though that was much, but for the spots of sin she could discern upon his soul.

Alas, an altered man was Roger Acton; almost since morning light, the leprosy had changed his very nature. The simple-minded Christian, toiling in contentment for his daily bread, cheerful for the passing day, and trustful for the coming morrow, this fair state was wellnigh faded away; whilst a bitterness of feeling against (in one word) GOD,—against unequal partialities in providence, against things as they exist, and this world's inexplicable government,—was gnawing at his very heart-strings, and cankering their roots by unbelief. It is a speedy process;—throw away faith with its trust for the past, love for the present, hope for the future,—and you throw away all that makes sorrow bearable, or joy lovely; the best of us, if God withheld his help, would apostatize like Peter, ere the cock crew thrice; and, at times, that help has wisely been withheld, to check presumptuous thoughts, and teach how true it is that the creature depends on the Creator. Just so we suffer a wilful little child, who is tottering about in leading-strings, to go alone for a minute and have a gentle fall. And just so Roger here, deserted for a time of those angelic ministrations whose efficiency is proved by godliness and meekness, by patience and content, is harassed in his spirit as by harpies, by selfishness and pride, and fretful doubtings; by a grudging hate of labor, and a fiery lust of gold. Temptation comes to teach weak man that he was fitted for his station, and his station made for him; that fulfilment of his ignorant desires will only make his case the worse; and that

Providence alike is wise
In what He gives, and what denies.

Meanwhile, gentle Grace, on her humble truckle-bed, is full of prayers and tears, uneasily listening to the indistinct and noisy talk, and hearing, now and then, some louder oath of Ben's, that made her shudder. Yes, she heard, too, the smashing sound, when the poacher flung the money down, and she feared it was a mug or a plate—no slight domestic loss; and she heard her father's strange cry, when he gave that wondering shout of joyous avarice, and she did not know what to fear.—Was he ill? or crazed? or worse,—fallen into bad excesses? How she prayed for him!

Poor Ben, too, honest-hearted Ben, she thought of him in charity, and pleaded for his good before the Throne of Mercy. Who knows but Heaven heard that saintly virgin prayer? There is love in Heaven yet for poor Ben Burke.

And if she prayed for Ben, with what an agony of deep-felt intercession did she plead for Thomas Acton, that own only brother of hers, just a year the younger to endear him all the more, her playmate, care, and charge, her friend and boisterous protector. The many sorrowing hours she had spent for his sake, and the thousand generous actions he had done for hers! Could she forget how the stripling fought for her that day, when rude Joseph Green would help her over the stile? Could she but remember how slily he had put aside, for more than half a year, a little heap of copper earnings,—weeding-money, and errand-money, and harvest-money, and then bounteously spent it all at once in giving her a Bible on her birth-day? And when, coming across the fields with him after leasing, years ago now, that fierce black bull of Squire Ryle's was rushing down upon us both, how bravely did the noble boy attack him with a stake, as he came up bellowing, and make the dreadful monster turn away! Ah! I looked death in the face then, but for thee, my brother! Remember him, my God, for good!

"Poor father! poor father! well, I am resolved upon one thing: I'll go, with Heaven's blessing, to the Hall myself, and see Sir John, to-morrow; he shall hear the truth, for"——And so Grace fell asleep.

Roger, when he went to bed, came to similar conclusions. He would speak up boldly, that he would, without fear or favor. Ben's most seasonable bounty, however to be questioned on the point of right, made him feel entirely independent both of bailiffs and squires, and he had now no anxieties, but rather hopes, about to-morrow. He was as good as they, with money in his pocket; so he'd down to the Hall, and face the baronet himself, and blow his bailiff out o' water: that should be his business by noon. Another odd idea, too, possessed him, and he could not sleep at night for thinking of it: it was a foolish fancy, but the dream might have put it in his head: what if one or other of those honey-jars, so flung here and there among the rushes, were in fact another sort of "Savings-bank"—a crock of gold? It was a thrilling thought,—his very dream, too; and the lot of shillings, and the shawl, ay, and the inquest, and the rumors how that Mrs. Quarles had come to her end unfairly, and no hoards found—and, and the honey-pots missing. Ha! at any rate he'd have a search to-morrow. No bugbear now should hinder him; money's money; he'd ask no questions how it got there. His own bit of garden lay the nearest to Pike Island, and who knows but Ben might have slung a crock this way? It wouldn't do to ask him though—for Burke might look himself, and get the crock,—was Roger's last and selfish thought, before he fell asleep.

As to Mrs. Acton, she, poor woman, had her own thoughts, fearful ones, about that shawl, and Ben's mysterious adventure. No cloudy love of mammon had overspread her mind, to hide from it the hideousness of murder; in her eyes, blood was terrible, and not the less so that it covered gold. She remembered at the inquest—be sure she was there among the gossips—the facts, so little taken notice of till now, the keys in the cupboard, where the honey-pots were not, and how Jonathan Floyd had seen something on the lake, and the marks of a man's hand on the throat; and, God forgive her for saying so, but Mr. Jennings was a little white-faced man. How wrong was it of Roger to have burnt that shawl! how dull of Ben not to have suspected something! but then the good fellow suspects nobody, and, I dare say, now doesn't know my thoughts. But Roger does, more

shame for him; or why burn the shawl? Ah! thought she, with all the gossip rampant in her breast, if I could only have taken it to the Hall myself, what a stir I should have caused. Yes, she would have reaped a mighty field of glory by originating such a whirlwind of inquiries and surmises. Even now, so attractive was the mare's nest, she would go to the Hall by morning and tell Sir John himself all about the burnt shawl, and Pike Island, and the gálli——. And so she fell fast asleep.

With respect to Ben, Tom, and Rover, a well-matched triad, as any Isis, Horus and Nepthys, they all flung themselves promiscuously on the hard floor beside the hearth, "basked at the fire their hairy strength," and soon were snoring away beautifully in concert, base, tenor, and treble, like a leash of glee-singers. No thoughts troubled them, either of mammon or murder: so, long before the meditative trio up-stairs, they had set a good example, and fallen asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

Love.

WITH the earliest peep of day arose sweet Grace, full of cheerful hope, and prayer, and happy resignation. She had a great deal to do that morning, for, innocent girl, she had no notion that it was quite possible to be too early at the Hall; her only fear was being too late. Then there were all the household cares to see to, and the dear babes to dress, and the place to tidy up, and breakfast to get ready, and anyhow she could not be abroad till half past eight: so, to her dismay, it must be past nine before ever she can see Sir John. Let us follow her a little: for on this important day we shall have to take the adventures of our laborer's family one at a time.

By twenty minutes to nine, Grace had contrived to bustle on her things, give the rest the slip, and be tripping to the Hall. It is nearly two miles off, as we already know; and Grace is such a pretty creature that we can clearly do no better than employ our time thitherward by taking a peep at her.

Sweet Grace Acton, we will not vex thy blushing maiden modesty by elaborate details of form, and face, and feature. Perfect womanhood at fair eighteen: let that fill all the picture up with soft and swelling charms; no wadding, or padding, or jigot, or jupe,—but all those graceful undulations are herself: no pearl-powder, no carmine, no borrowed locks, no musk or ambergris,—but all those feeble helps of meretricious art excelled and superseded by their just originals in nature. It will not do to talk, as a romancer may, of velvet cheeks and silken tresses; or invoke, to the aid of our inadequate description, roses, and swans, and peaches, and lilies. Take the simple village beauty as she is: did you ever look on prettier lips or sweeter eyes,—more glossy natural curls upon a whiter neck? And how that little red-riding-hood cloak, and the simple cottage

hat tied down upon her cheeks, and the homely russet gown all too short for modern fashions, and the white well-turned ankle, and the tidy little leather shoe, and the bunch of snow-drops in her tucker, and the neat mittens contrasting darkly with her fair bare arms,—pretty Grace, how well all these become thee! There, trip along, with health upon thy cheek, and hope within thy heart; who can resist so eloquent a pleader? Haste on, haste on, save thy father in his trouble, as thou hast blest him in his sin,—this rustic lane is to thee the path of duty,—Heaven speed thee on it!

More slowly now, and with more anxious thoughts, more heart-weakness, more misgiving,—Grace approached the stately mansion: and when she timidly touched the "Servants'" bell, for she felt too lowly for the "Visitors',"—and when she heard how terribly loud it was, how long it rung, and what might be the issue of her—wasn't it ill-considered?—errand,—the poor girl almost fainted at the sound.

As she leant unconsciously for strength against the door, it opened on a sudden, and Jonathan Floyd, in mute amazement, caught her in his arms.

"Why, Grace Acton, what's the matter with you?" Jonathan knew Grace well, they had been at dame's-school together, and in after years attended the same Sunday class at church. There had been some talk among the gossips about Jonathan and Grace, and ere now folks had been kind enough to say they would make a pretty couple. And folks were right, too, as well as kind: for a fine young fellow was Jonathan Floyd, as any duchess's footman; tall, well built, and twenty-five; Antinous in a livery. Well to do, withal, though his wages don't come straight to him; for, independently of his place,—and the baronet likes him for his good looks and proper manners,—he is Farmer Floyd's only son, on the hill yonder, as thriving a small tenant as any round abouts; and he is proud of his master, of his blue and silver uniform, of old Hurstley, and of all things in the general, except himself.

"But what on earth's the matter, Grace?" he was obliged to repeat, for the dear girl's agitation was extreme.

"Jonathan, can I see the baronet?"

"What, at nine in the morning, Grace Acton?—call again at two, and you may find him getting up. He hasn't been three hours abed yet, and there's nobody about but Sarah Stack and me. I wish those Lunnun sparks would but leave the place: they do his honor no good, I'm thinking."

"Not till two!" was the slow and mournful ejaculation: what a damper to her buoyant hopes: and Providence had seen fit to give her ill-success. Is it so?—Prosperity may come in other shapes.

"Why, Grace," suddenly said Floyd, in a very nervous way, "what, what makes you call upon my master in this tidy trim?"

"To save my father," answered Innocence.

"How? why? Oh don't, Grace, don't! I'll save him—I will indeed,—what is it? Oh don't, don't."

For the poor affectionate fellow conjured on the spot the black vision of a father saved by a daughter's degradation.

"Don't, Jonathan? it is my duty, and God will bless me in it. That cruel Mr. Jennings has resolved upon our ruin, and I wished to tell Sir John the truth of it."

At this hearing Jonathan brightened up, and glibly said, "Ah, indeed, Jennings is a trouble to us all: a sad life I've led of it this year past; and I've paid him pretty handsomely too, to let me keep the place: while as for John Page, and the grooms, and Mr. Coachman and the helpers, they don't touch much o' their wages on quarter-day, I know."

"Oh, but we, we are ruined,—ruined: father is forbidden now to labor for our bread;" and then with many tears she told her tale.

"Stop, Miss Grace," suddenly said Jonathan, for her beauty and eloquence transformed the cottager into a lady in his eyes, and no wonder · "pray, stop a minute, Miss,—please to take a seat, I sha'n't be gone an instant."

And the good-hearted fellow, whose eyes had long been very red, broke away at a gallop; but was back again almost as soon as gone, panting like a post-horse. "Oh, Grace, don't be angry, do forgive me what I am going to do."

"Do, Jonathan?" and the beauty involuntarily started,—"I hope it's nothing wrong," she added solemnly.

"Whether right or wrong, Grace, take it kindly; you have often bade me read my Bible, and I do so many times both for sake of it and you, ay, and meet with many pretty sayings in it: forgive me, if I act on one,—'It is more blessed to give than to receive:'" with that, he thrust into her hand a brass-topped red-leather purse, stuffed with money. Generous fellow! all the little savings, that had heretofore escaped the prying eye and filching grasp of Simon Jennings. There was some little gold in it, more silver, and a lot of bulky copper.

"Dear Jonathan!" exclaimed Grace, quite thrown off her guard of maidenly reserve, "this is too kind, too good, too much, indeed, indeed it is: I cannot take the purse:" and her bright eyes overflowed again.

"Well, girl," said Jonathan, gulping down an apple in his throat, "I, I won't have the money, that's all. Oh, Grace, Grace," he burst out earnestly, "let me be the blessed means of helping you in trouble,—I would die to do it, Grace, indeed I would!"

The dear girl fell upon his neck, and they wept together like two loving little sisters.

"Jonathan,"—her duteous spirit was the first to speak, "forgive this weakness of a foolish woman's heart: I will not put away the help which God provides us at your friendly hands: only this, kind brother,—let me call you brother,—keep the purse; if my father pines for want of work, and the babes at home lack food, pardon my boldness if I take the help you offer. Meanwhile, God in heaven bless you, Jonathan, as He will."

And she turned to go away.

"Won't you take a keepsake, Grace, one little token? I wish I had anything here but money to give you for my sake."

"It would even be ungenerous in me to refuse you, brother; one little piece will do."

Jonathan fumbled up something in a crumpled piece of paper, and said sobbingly, "Let it be this new half-crown, Grace: I won't say, keep it always; only when you want to use that and more, I humbly ask you'll please come to me."

Now, a more delicate, a more unselfish act, was never done by man: along with the half-crown he had packed up two sover-

eigns! and thereby not only escaped thanks, concealed his own beneficence, and robbed his purse of half its little store; but actually he was, by doing so, depriving himself for a month, or may-be more, of a visit from Grace Acton. Had it been only half-a crown, and want had pinched the family (neither Grace nor Jonathan could guess of Ben Burke's bounty, and for all they knew Roger had not enough for the morrow's meals),—had poverty come in like an armed man, and stood upon their threshold a grim sentinel,—doubtless she must have run to him within a day or two. How sweet would it have been to have kept her coming day by day, and to a commoner affection how excusable: but still how selfish, how unlike the liberal and honorable feeling that filled the manly heart of Jonathan Floyd! It was a noble act, and worthy of a long parenthesis.

If Grace Acton had looked back as she hurried down the avenue, she would have seen poor Jonathan still watching her with all his eyes till she was out of sight. Perhaps, though, she might have guessed it,—there is a sympathy in these things, the true animal magnetism,—and I dare say that was the very reason why she did not once turn her head.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Discovery.

ROGER ACTON had not slept well; had not slept at all till nearly break of day, except in the feverish fashion of half dream, half reverie. There were thick-coming fancies all night long about what Ben had said and done: and more than once Roger had thought of the expediency of getting up, to seek without delay the realization of that one idea which now possessed him,—a crock of gold. When he put together one thing and another, he considered it almost certain that Ben had flung away among the lot no mere honey-pot, but perhaps indeed a money-pot: Burke hadn't half the cunning of a child; more fool he, and may-be so much the better for me, thought money-bitten selfish Roger. Thus, in the night's hot imaginations, he resolved to find the spoil; to will was then to do: to do was then to conquer. However, Nature's sweet restorer came at last, and, when he woke, the idea had sobered down,—last night's fancies were preposterous. So, it was with a heavy heart he got up later than his wont,—no work before him, nothing to do till the afternoon when he might see Sir John, except it be to dig a bit in his little marshy garden. When Grace ran to the Hall, Roger was going forth to dig.

Now, I know quite well that the reader is as fully aware as I am, what is about to happen; but it is impossible to help the matter. If the heading of this chapter tells the truth, a "discovery" of some sort is inevitable. Let us preliminarize a thought or two, if thereby we can hang some shadowy veil of excuse over a too naked mystery. First and foremost, truth is strange, stranger et-cetera; and this et-cetera, pregnant as one of Lyttelton's, intends to add the superlative strangest, to the comparative stranger of that seldom quoted sentiment. To

every one of us, in the course of our lives, something quite as extraordinary has befallen more than once. What shall we say of omens, warnings, forebodings? What of the most curious runs of luck; the most whimsical freaks of fortune; the unaccountable things that happen round us daily, and no one marvels at them, till he reads of them in print? Even as Macpherson, ingenious if not ingenuous, gathered Ossian from the lips of Highland hussifs, and made the world, with modern Attila to back it, wonder at the stores that are hived on old wives' tongues; even so might any other literary blacksmith hammer from the ore of common gossip a regular Vulcan's net of superstitious "facts." Never yet was uttered ghost story, that did not breed four others; every one at table is eager to record his, or his aunt's, experiences in that line; and the mass of queer coincidences, inexplicable incidents, indubitable seeings, hearings, doings, and sufferings, which you and I have heard of in this popular vein of talk, would amply excuse the wildest fictionist for the most extravagant adventure—the more improbable, the nearer truth. Talk of the devil, said our ancestors,—let "&c." save us from the consequence. Think of anything vehemently, and it is an even chance it happens: be confident, you conquer; be obstinate in willing, and events shall bend humbly to their lord: nay, dream a dream, and if you recollect it in the morning, and it bother you next day, and you cannot get it out of your head for a week, and the matter positively haunt you, ten to one but it finds itself or makes itself fulfilled, some odd day or other. Just so, doubtless, will it prove to be with Roger's dream: I really cannot help the matter.

Again, it is more than likely that the reader is clever, very clever, and that any attempts at concealment would be merely futile. From the first page he has discovered who is the villain, and who the victim: the title alone tells him of the golden hinge on which the story turns: he can look through stone walls, if need be, or mesmerically see, without making use of eyes: no peepholes for him, as for Pyramus and Thisbe: no initiation requisite for any hidden mysteries; all arcana are revealed to him, every sanctum is a highway. No art of mortal pen can defeat this mischief of acuteness: character is cha-

racter; oaks grow of acorns, and the plan of a life may be detected in a microscopic speech. The career of Mr. Jennings is as much pre-destined by us to iniquity, from the first intimation that he never makes excuse, as honest Roger is to trouble and temptation from the weary effort wherewithal he woke. And, even now, pretty Grace and young Sir John, the reader thinks that he can guess at nature's consequence; while, with respect to Roger's going forth to dig this morning, he sees it straight before him, need not ask for the result. Well, if the shrewd reader has the eye of Lieuenhöeck, and can discern, cradled in the small triangular beech-mast, a noble forest tree, with silvery trunk, branching arms, and dark-green foliage, he deserves to be complimented, indeed, for his own keen skill; but, at the same time, Nature will not hurry herself for him, but will quietly educe results which he foreknew—or thought he did—a century ago. And is there not the highest Art in this unveiled simplicity: to lead the reader onwards by a straight road, with the setting sun ablaze at the end of it, knowing his path, knowing its object, yet still borne on with spirits unexhausted and unflagging foot? Trust me, there is better praise in this, than in dazzling the distracted glance with a perpetual succession of luminous fire-flies, and dragging your fair novel-reader, harried and excited, through the mazes of a thousand incidents.

Thirdly, and lastly, in this prefatorial say, there is to be considered that inevitable defeator of all printed secrets—impatience. Nothing is easier, nothing commoner (most wise people do it, whose fate is, that they must keep up with the race of current publication, and therefore must keep down the still increasing crowd of authorial creations), nothing is more venial, more laudable, than to read the last chapter first; and so, finding out all mysteries at once, to save one's self a vast deal of unnecessary trouble. And, for mere tale-telling, this may be sufficient. What need to burden memory with imaginary statements, or to weary out one's sympathies on trite fictitious woes?—come to the catastrophe at once: the uncle hanged; the heir righted; the heroine an orange-flowered bride; and the white-headed grandmother, after all her wrongs, winding up the story with a prudent moral. Now this may all be very well with histories

that merely carry a sting in the tail, whose moral is the warning of the rattlesnake, and whose hot-exciting interest is posted with the scorpion's venom. They are the Dragon of Wantley, with one caudal point—a barbed termination: we, like Moore of Moore Hall, all point, covered with spikes: everywhere we boast ourselves an ethical hedge-hog, all-over-armed with keen morals—a Rumor, painted full of tongues, echoing all around with revealing of secrets. The feelings of our humble hero, altered Roger Acton, are worthy to be studied by the great, to be sifted by the rich; and Grace's simple tongue may teach the sage, for its wisdom cometh from above; and Jonathan, for all his shoulder-knot and smart cockade, is worthy to give lessons to his master: that master, also, is far better than you think him; and poor Burke, too, for true humanity's sake: so we get a mint of morals, set aside the story. It is not raw material, but the workmanship, that gives its value to the flowered damask; our grand-dames' sumptuous taffeties and stand-alone brocades are but spun silk—worms' interiors; the fairest statue is intrinsically but a mass of clumsy stone, until, indeed, the sculptor has roughhewn it, and shaped it, and chiselled it, and finished all the touches with sand-paper. This story of "The Crock of Gold" purports to be a Dutch picture, as becometh boors, their huts, their short and simple annals; so that, after its moralities, the mass of minute detail is the only thing that gives it any value.

Now, whilst all you have been yawning through these egotistic phrases, Roger has been digging in his garden; there he is, pecking away at what once was the celery-bed, but now are fallow trenches; celery, as we all know, is a water-loving plant, doing best in marshy-land, so no wonder the trenches open on the sedge, and the muddy shallow opposite Pike Island puddles up to them. There needs be no suspense, no mystery at all; Roger's dream had clearly sent him thither, for he should not have levelled those trenches yet awhile, it was a little too soon,—bad husbandry; and, barring the appearance of a devil, Roger's dream came true. Yes, under the roots of a clump of bulrush, he lifted out with his spade,—a pot of Narbonne honey!

When first he spied the pot, his heart was in his mouth,—it must be gold, and with tottering knees he raised the precious

burden. But, woful disappointment, the word "Honey," with plenty of French and Fortnum on another pasted label, stared him in the face; it was sweet and slimy too about the neck; there was no sort of jingle when he shook the crock; what though it be heavy ?—honey's heavy; and it was tied over quite in a common way with pig's bladder, and his clumsy trembling fingers could not undo that knot; and thus, with a miserable sense of cheated poverty, he threw it down beside the path, and would perhaps have flung it right away in sheer disgust, but for the reflection that the little ones might like it. Once, indeed, that glorious doubt of may-be gold came back upon his mind, and he lifted up the spade to smash the baffling pot, and so make sure of what it might contain;—make sure, eh ? why, you would only lose the honey, whispered domestic economy. So he left the jar to be opened by his wife when he should go in.

CHAPTER XIV.

Jonathan's Store.

And where has Mrs. Acton been all this morning? Off to the Hall, very soon after Grace had got away; and she rung at the side entrance, hard by the kitchen, most fortunately caught Sarah Stack about, and had a good long gossip with her; telling her open-mouthed all about Ben Burke having found a shawl of Mrs. Quarles's on the island; and how, it being very rotten, yes, and smelling foul, Ben had been fool enough to burn it; what a pity! how could the shawl have got there? if it only could ha' spoken what it knew. And the bereaved gossips mourned together over secrets undivulged, and their evidence destroyed. As to the crockery, for a miraculous once in life, Mrs. Acton held her tongue about a thing she knew, and said not a syllable concerning it. Roger would be mad to lose the money. Just at parting with her friend, Mary Acton was going out by the wrong door, through the hall, but luckily did no more than turn the handle; or she never could have escaped bouncing in upon the lovers' interview, and thereby occasioning a chaos of confusion. For, be it whispered, the step-dame was not a little jealous of her ready-made daughter's beauty, persisted in calling her a child, and treated her anything but kindly and sisterly, as her full-formed woman's loveliness might properly have looked for. Only imagine, if the Hecate had but seen Jonathan's lit-up looks, or Grace's downcast blushes; for it really slipped n.y observation to record that there were blushes, and probably some cause for them when the keepsake was given and accepted; only conceive if the step-mother had heard Jonathan's afterward soliloquy, when he was watching pretty Grace as she tripped away,—and how much he seemed to think of her eyes and eyelashes! I am reasonably fearful, had she heard and seen all this, Poll

Acton's nails might have possibly drawn blood from the cheeks of Jonathan Floyd. As it was, the little god of love kindly warded from his votaries the coming of so crabbed an antagonist.

Grace has now reached home again, blessing her overruling stars to have escaped notice so entirely both in going and returning; for the mother was hard at washing near the well, having got in half an hour before, and father has not yet left off digging in his garden. So she crept up stairs quietly, put away her Sunday best, and is just dropping on her knees beside her truckle-bed, to speak of all her sorrows to her Heavenly Friend, and to thank him for the kindness He had raised her in an earthly one. She then, with no small trepidation, took out of her tucker, just below those withered snow-drops, the crumpled bit of paper that held Jonathan's parting gift. It was surprising how her tucker heaved; she could hardly get at the parcel. She wanted to look at that half-crown; not that she feared it was a bad one, or was curious about coins, or felt any pleasure in possessing such a sum: but there was such a don't-know-what connected with that new half-crown, which made her long to look at it; so she opened the paper—and found its golden fellows! O noble heart! O kind, generous, unselfish,—yes, beloved Jonathan! But what is she to do with the sovereigns? Keep them? No, she cannot keep them, however precious in her sight as proofs of deep affection; but she will call as soon as possible, and give them back, and insist upon his taking them, and keeping them too,—for her, if no otherwise. And the dear innocent girl was little aware herself, how glad she felt of the excuse to call so soon again at Hurstley.

Meantime, for safety, she put the money in her Bible.

What hallowed gold was that! Gained by honest industry, saved by youthful prudence, given liberally and unasked, to those who needed and could not pay again; with a delicate consideration, an heroic essay at concealment, a voluntary sacrifice of self, of present pleasure, passion, and affection. And there it lies, the little store, hidden up in Grace's Bible. She has prayed over it, thanked over it, interceded over it, for herself, for it, for others. How different, indeed, from ordinary gold, from common sin-bought mammon; how different from that unblest store.

which Roger Acton covets; how purified from meannesses, and separate from harms! This is of that money, the scarcest coins of all the world, endued with all good properties in heaven and in earth, whereof it had been written, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Such alone are truly riches—well earned, well-saved, well sanctified, well spent. The wealthiest of European capitalists—the Crœsus of modern civilisation—may be but a pauper in that better currency, whereof a sample has been shown in the store of Jonathan Floyd.

CHAPTER XV.

Another Discovery, and the Earnest of Good Things.

"DAME, here's one o' Ben's gallipots he flung away: it's naught but honey, dame—marked so—no crock of gold; don't expect it; no such thing; luck like that isn't for such as me: though, being as it is, the babes may like it, with their dry bread: open it, goodwife: I hope the water mayn't ha' spoilt it."

The notable Mary Acton produced certain scissors, hanging from her pocket by a tape, and cut a knot, which to Roger had been Gordian's.

"Why, it's bran, Acton, not honey; look here, will you." She tilted it up, and, along with a cloud of sawdust, dropped out a heavy hailstorm of—little bits of leather!

"Hallo! what's that?" said Roger, eagerly: "it's gold, gold, I'll be sworn!" It was so.

Every separate bit of money, whatever kind of coins they were, had been tidily sewn up in a shred of leather; remnants of old gloves of all colors; and the Narbonne jar contained six hundred and eighty-seven of them. These, of course, were hastily picked up from the path whereon they had first fallen, were counted out at home, and the glittering contents of most of those little leather-bags ripped up were immediately discovered. Oh dear, oh dear, such a sight! Guineas and half-guineas, sovereigns and half-sovereigns, quite a little hill of bright, clean, prettily figured gold.

"Hip, hip, hooray!" shouted Roger in an ecstacy; "Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" and in the madness of his joy, he executed an extravagant pas seul; up went his hat, round went his heels, and he capered awkwardly like a lunatic giraffe.

"Here's an end to all our troubles, Poll; we're as good as gentlefolks now: catch me a-calling at the Hall, to bother about

Jennings and Sir John: a fig for bailiffs and baronets, parsons, and prisons and all," and again he roared Hooray! "I tell you what though, old 'ooman, we must just try the taste of our glorious golden luck, before we do anything else. Bide a bit, wench, and hide the hoard till I return. I'm off to the Bacchus's Arms, and I'll bring you some stingo in a minute, old gal." So off he ran hot-foot, to get an earnest of the blessing of his crock of gold.

The minute that was promised to produce the stingo, proved to be rather of a lengthened character; it might, indeed, have been a minute or the fraction of one, in the planet Herschel, whose year is as long as eighty-five of our Terra's, but according to Greenwich calculation, it was nearer like two hours.

The little Tom and Jerry shop, that rejoiced in the classical heraldry of Bacchus's Arms, had been startled from all conventionalities by the unwonted event of the demand, "change for a sovereign?" and when it was made known to the assembled conclave that Roger Acton was the fortunate possessor, that even assumed an appearance positively miraculous.

"Why, honest Roger, how in the world could you ha' come by that?" was the troublesome inquiry of Dick the Tanner.

"Well, Acton, you're sharper than I took you for, if you can squeeze gold out of bailiff Jennings," added Solomon Snip; and Roger knew no better way of silencing their tongues, than by profusely drenching them in liquor. So he stood treat all round, and was forced to hobanob with each; and when that was gone, he called for more to keep their curiosity employed. Now all this caused delay; and if Mary had been waiting for the "stingo," she would doubtless have had reasonable cause for anger and impatience: however, she, for her part, was so pleasantly occupied, like Prince Arthur's Queen, in counting out the money, that, to say truth, both lord and liquor were entirely forgotten.

But another cause that lengthened out the minute, was the embarrassing business of where to find the change. Bacchus's didn't chalk up trust, where hard money was flung upon the counter; but all the accumulated wealth of Bacchus's high-priest, Tom Swipey, and of the seven worshippers now drinking in his honor, could not suffice to make up enough of change; therefore, after two gallons left behind him in libations as aforesaid, and two

more bottled up for a drink offering at home, Roger was contented to be owed seven and fourpence; a debt never likely to be liquidated. Much speculation this afforded to the gossips; and when the treater's back was turned, they touched their foreheads, for the man was clearly crazed, and they winked to each other with a gesture of significance.

Grace, while musing on her new half-crown,—it was strange how long she looked at it,—had heard with real amazement that uproarious huzzaing! and, just as her father had levanted for the beer, glided down from her closet, and received the wondrous tidings from her step-mother. She heard in silence, if not in sadness: intuitive good sense proclaimed to her that this sudden gush of wealth was a temptation, even if she felt no secret fears on the score of—shall we call it, superstition,—that dream, this crock, that dark angel,—and this so changed spirit of her once religious father: what could she think? she meekly looked to Heaven to avert all ill.

Mary Acton also was less elated and more alarmed than she cared to confess: not that she, any more than Grace, knew or thought about lords of manors, or physical troubles on the score of finding the crock: but Mrs. Quarles's shawl, and sundry fearful fancies tinged with blood, these worried her exceedingly, and made her look upon the gold with an uneasy feeling, as if it were an unclean thing, a sort of Achan's wedge.

At last, here comes Roger back, somewhat unsteadily I fear, with a stone two-gallon jar of what he was pleased to avouch to be "the downright stingo." "Hooray Poll" (he had not ceased shouting all the way from Bacchus's), "Hooray,—here I be again, a gentlefolk, a lord, a king, Poll: why daughter Grace, what's come to you? I won't have no dull looks about to-day, girl. Isn't this enough to make a poor man merry? No more troubles, no more toil, no more 'humble sarvent,' no more a ragged plodding ploughman: but a lord, daughter Grace, a great, rich, luxurious lord,—isn't this enough to make a man sing out hooray?—Thank the crock of gold for this,—Oh blessed crock!"

"Hush, father, hush! that gold will be no blessing to you. heaven send it do not bring a curse. It will be a sore tempta

tion, even if the rights of it are not in some one else: we know not whom it may belong to, but at any rate it cannot well be ours."

"Not ours, child? whose in life is it then?"

Mary Acton, made quite meek by a superstitious dread of having money of the murdered, stepped in to Grace's help, whom her father's fierce manner had appalled, with

"Roger, it belonged to Mrs. Quarles, I'm morally sure on it,—and must now be Simon Jennings's, her heir."

"What?" he almost frantically shrieked, "shall that white hell-hound rob me yet again? No, Dame,—I'll hang first! the crock I found, the crock I'll keep: the money's mine, whoever did the murder." Then, changing his mad tone into one of reckless inebriate gaiety, for he was more than half-seas over even then from the pot-house toastings and excitement, he added, "But come, wenches, down with your mugs and help me to get through the jar: I never felt so dry in all my life. Here's Blessings on the crock, on him as sent it, him as has it, and on all the joy and comfort it's to bring us! Come, drink, drink,—we must all drink that;—but where's Tom?"

If Roger had been quite himself, he never would have asked so superfluous a question: for Tom was always in one and the same company, albeit never in one and the same place: he and his Pan-like Mentor were continually together, studying woodcraft, water-craft, and all manner of other craft connected with the antique trade of picking and stealing.

"Where's Tom?"

Grace, glad to have to answer any reasonable question, mildly answered, "Gone away with Ben, father."

Alas! that little word, Ben, gave occasion to reveal a depth in Roger's fall, which few could have expected to behold so soon. To think that the liberal friend, who only last night had frankly shared his all with him, whose honest glowing heart would freely shed its blood for him, that he in recollection should be greeted with a loathing! Ben would come and claim some portion of his treasure,—he would cry halves,—or who knows? might want all, all: and take it by strong arm, or by threat to 'peach against him:—curse that Burke! he hated him.

Oh Steady Acton, what has made thee drink and swear?

Oh Honest Roger, what has planted guile, and suspicion, and malice in thy heart? Are these the mere first fruits of coveting, and having? Is this the earliest blessing of that luck which many long for,—the finding of a crock of gold?

We would not enlarge upon the scene; a painful one at all times, when man forgets his high prerogative, and drowns his reason in the tankard: but, in a Roger Acton's case, lately so wise, temperate, and patient, peculiarly distressing. Its chief features were these. Grace tasted nothing, but mournfully looked on: once only she attempted to expostulate, but was met—not with fierce oaths, nor coarse chidings, nor even with idiotic drivelling, oh no, worse than that she felt: he replied to her with the maudlin drunken promise, "If she'd only be a good girl, and let him bide, he'd give her a big church-bible, bound in solid gold,—that 'ud make the book o' some real value, Grace." Poor broken-hearted daughter,—she rushed to her closet in a torrent of tears.

As for Mary Acton, she was miraculously meek and dumb; all the scold was quelled within her; the word "blood" was the Petruchio that tamed that shrew; she could see a-plenty of those crimson spots, which might

> "The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
> Making the green, one red,"

dancing in the sunbeams, dotted on the cottage walls, sprinkled as unholy water, over that foul crock. Would not the money be a curse to them anyhow, say nothing of the danger? If things went on as they began, Mary might indeed have cause for fear: actually, she could not a-bear to look upon the crock; she quite dreaded it, as if it had contained a "bottled devil." So there she sat ever so long, silent, thoughtful, and anything but comfortable.

What became of Roger until next day at noon, neither he nor I can tell: true, his carcase lay there upon the floor, and the two-gallon jar was empty. But, for the real man, who could answer to the name of Roger Acton, the sensitive and conscious soul,—that was somewhere galloping away for fifteen hours in the Paradise of fools: the Paradise? no,—the Maëlstrom; tossed about giddily and painfully in one whirl of tumultuous drunkenness.

CHAPTER XVI.

How the Home was Blest Thereby.

It will surprise no one to be told that, however truly such an excess may have been the first, it was by no means the last exploit of our altered laborer in the same vein of heroism. Bacchus's was quite close, and he needs must call for his change; he had to call often; drank all quits; changed another sovereign, and was owed again; but, trust him, he wasn't going to be cheated out of that: take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves. But still it was ditto repeated; changing, being owed, grudging, grumbling: at last he found out the famous new plan of owing himself; and as Bacchus's did not see fit to reject such wealthy customers, Roger soon chalked up a yard-long score, and grew so niggardly that they could not get a penny from him.

It is astonishing how immediately wealth brings in, as its companion, meanness: they walk together, and stand together, and kneel together, as the hectoring, prodigal Faulconbridge, the Bastard Plantagenet in King John, does with his white-livered, puny brother, Robert. Wherefore, no sooner was Roger blest with gold, than he resolved not to be such a fool as to lose liberally, or to give away one farthing. To give, I say, for extravagant indulgence is another thing; and it was a fine, proud pleasure to feast a lot of fellows at his sole expense. If meanness is brother to wealth, it is at any rate first cousin to extravagance.

When the dowager collects "her dear five hundred friends" to parade before the fresh young heirs her wax-light lovely daughters,—when all is glory, gallopade, and Gunter,—when Rubini warbles smallest, and Lablache is heard as thunder on the stairs,—speak, tradesmen, ye who best can tell, the close-

ness that has catered for that feast; tell it out, ye famished milliners, ground down to sixpence on a ball-dress bill; whisper it, ye footmen, with your wages ever due; let Gath, let Ascalon re-echo with the truth, that extortion is the parent of extravagance!

Now, that episode should have been in a foot note; but no one takes the trouble to read notes; and with justice too, for if a man has anything to say, let him put it in his text, as orderly as may be. And, if order be sometimes out of the question, as seems but clearly suitable at present to our hero's manner of life, it is wise to go boldly on, without so prim an usher; to introduce our thoughts as they reveal themselves, ignorant of "their own degrees," not "standing on the order of their coming" but, as a pit crowd on a benefit night, bustling over one another, helter-skelter, "in most admired disorder." This will well comport with Roger's daily life; for, notwithstanding the frequent interference of an Amazon wife—regardless of poor dear Grace's gentle voice and melancholy eyes—in spite of a conscience pricking in his breast, with the spines of a horse-chestnut, that evil crock appeared from the beginning to have been found for but one sole purpose—videlicet, that of keeping alight in Roger's brain the fire of mad intoxication.—Yes, there were sundry other purposes, too, which may as well be told directly.

The utter dislocation of all home comforts occupied the foremost rank. True,—in comparison with the homes of affluence and halls of luxury—those comforts may have formerly seemed few and far between; yet still the angel of domestic peace not seldom found a rest within the cottage. Not seldom? always: if sweet-eyed Grace be such an angel, that ever-abiding guest, full of love, duty, piety, and cheerfulness. But now, after long-enduring anguish, vexed in her righteous soul by the shocking sights and sounds of the drunkard and his parasites (for all the idle vagabonds about soon flocked around rich Acton, and were freely welcome to his reckless prodigality), Grace had been forced to steal away, and seek refuge with a neighbor. Here was one blessing the less.

Another wretched change was in the wife. Granted, Mary Acton had not ever been the pink of politeness, the violet of

meekness, nor the rose of entire amiability: but if she were a scold, that scolding was well meant; and her irate energies were incessantly directed towards cleanliness, economy, quiet, and other notabilia of a busy housewife. She did her best to keep the hovel tidy, to make the bravest show with their scanty chattels, to administer discreetly the stores of their frugal larder, and to recompense the good-man returning from his hard day's work, with much of rude joy and bustling kindness. But now, after the first stupor of amazement into which the crock and its consequences threw her, Poll Acton grew to be a Fury: she raged and stormed, as well she might, at filth and discomfort in her home, at nauseous dregs and noisome fumes, at the orgy still kept up, day by day, and night by night, through the length of that first foul week, which succeeded the fortunate discovery. And not in vain she raged and stormed,—and fought too; for she did fight—ay, and conquered: and miserable Roger, now in full possession of those joys which he had longed for at the casement of Hurstley Hall, was glad to betake himself to the bench at Bacchus's, whither he withdrew his ragged regiment. Thus, that crock had spoilt all there was to spoil in the temper and conduct of the wife.

Look also at the pretty prattling babes, twin boys of two years old, whom Roger used to hasten home to see; who had to say their simple prayers; to be kissed and comforted, and put to bed; to be made happier by a wild flower picked up on his path, than if the gift had been a coral, with gold bells: where were they now? neglected, dirty, fretting in a corner, their red eyes full of wonder at father's altered ways, and their quick minds watching, with astonished looks, the progress of domestic discord. How the crock of gold had nipped those early blossoms as a killing frost!

Again, there used to be, till this sad week of wealth and riotous hilarity, that constantly recurring blessing of the morn and evening prayer which Roger read aloud, and Grace's psalm or chapter; and afterwards the frugal meal—too scanty, perhaps, and coarse—but still refreshing, thank the Lord, and seasoned well with health and appetite; and the heartfelt sense of satisfaction that all around was earned by honest labor; and there

was content, and hope of better times, and God's good blessing over everything.

Now, all these pleasures had departed; gold, unhallowed gold, gotten hastily in the beginning, broadcast on the rank strong soil of a heart that coveted it earnestly, had sprung up as a crop of poisonous tares, and choked the patch of wheat: gold, unhallowed gold, light come, light gone, had scared or killed the flock of unfledged loves that used to nestle in the cotter's thatch, as surely as if the cash were stones, flung wantonly by truants at a dove-cot; and forth from the crock, that egg of wo, had been hatched a red-eyed vulture, to tyrannize in this sad home, where but lately the pelican had dwelt, had spread her fostering wing, and poured out the wealth of her affections.

CHAPTER XVII.

Care.

But other happy consequences soon became apparent. If Acton in his tipsy state was mad, in his intervals of soberness he was thoroughly miserable. And this, not merely on the score of sickness, exhaustion, prostrated spirits, blue-devils, or other the long catalogue of a drunkard's joys; not merely from a raging wife, and a wretched home; not merely from the stings, however sharp, however barbed, of a conscience ill at ease, that would rise up fiercely like a hissing snake, and strike the black apostate to the earth: these all, doubtless, had their pleasant influences, adding to the lucky finder's bliss: but there was another root of misery most unlooked for, and, to the poor who dream of gold, entirely paradoxical.

The possession of that crock was the heaviest of cares. Where on earth was he to hide it? how to keep it safely, secretly? What if he were robbed of it in some sly way! O thought of utter wo! it made the fortunate possessor quiver like an aspen. Or what, if some one or more of those blustering boon companions were to come by night with a bludgeon and a knife, and—and cut his throat, and find the treasure? or worse still, were to torture him, set him on the fire like a saucepan (he had heard of Turpin having done so with a rich old woman), and make him tell them "where" in his extremity of pains, and give up all, and then, and then,—murder him at last, outright, and afterwards burn the hovel over his head, babes and all, that none might live to tell the tale? These fears set him on the rack, and furnished one inciting cause to that uninterrupted orgy; he must be either mad or miserable, this lucky finder.

Also, even in his tipsy state, he could not cast off care: he might in his cups reveal the dangerous secret of having found

a crock of gold. A secret still it was: Grace, his wife, and himself were the only souls who knew it. Dear Grace feared to say a word about the business: not in apprehension of the law, for she never thought of that too probable intrusion on the finder: but simply because her unsophisticated piety believed that God, for some wise end, had allowed the Evil One to tempt her father: she, indeed, did not know the epigram,

> The devil now is wiser than of yore,
> He tempts by making rich, not making poor:—

but she did not conceive that notion in her mind; she contrasted the wealthy patriarch Job tried by poverty and pain, but just and patient in adversity,—with the poor laborer Acton, tried by luxury and wealth, and proved to be apostate in prosperity: so she held her tongue, and hitherto had been silent on a matter of so much local wonder as her father's sudden wealth, in the midst of urgent curiosity and extraordinary rumors.

Mary was kept quiet, as we know, by superstition of a lower grade, the dread of having money of the murdered, a thought she never breathed to any but her husband; and to poor uninitiated Grace (who had not heard a word of Ben's adventure), her answer about Mrs. Quarles and Mr. Jennings in the dawn of the crock's first blessing, had been entirely unintelligible: Mary, then, said never a word, but looked on dreadingly to see the end.

As for Roger himself, he was too much in apprehension of a landlord's claims, and of a task-master's extortions, to breathe a syllable about the business. So he hid his crock as best he could, —we shall soon hear how and where,—took out sovereign after sovereign day by day, and made his flush of instant wealth, a mystery, a miracle, a legacy, good luck, anything, everything, but the truth: and he would turn fiercely round to the frequent questioner with a, "What's that to you?—Nobody's business but mine:" and then would coaxingly add the implied bribe to secresy, in his accustomed invitation,—"And now, what'll you take?" A magical phrase, which could suffice to quell murmurs for the time, and postponed curiosity to appetite. Thus the

fact was still unknown, and weighed on Roger's mind as a guilty concealment, an oppressive secret. What if any found it out?

For immediate safety,—the evening after his memorable first fifteen hours of joy,—he buried the crock deeply in a hole in his garden, filling all up hard with stones and brick-bats; and when he had smoothed it straight and workmanlike, remembered that he surely hadn't kept out enough to last him; so up it had to come again,—five more taken out, and the crock was restored to its unquiet grave.

Scarcely had he done this, than it became dark, and he began to fancy some one might have seen him hide it; those low mean tramps (never before had he refused the wretched wayfarers his sympathy) were always sneaking about, and would come and dig it up in the night: so he went out in the dark and the rain, got at it with infinite trouble and a broken pickaxe, and exultingly brought the crock in-doors; where he buried it a third time, more securely, underneath the grouted floor, close beside the fire in the chimney corner: it was now nearly midnight, and he went to bed.

Hardly had he tumbled in, after pulling on a nightcap of the flagon, than the dread idea overtook him that his treasure might be melted! Was there ever such a fool as he? Well, well, to think he could fling his purse on the fire! What a horrid thought! Metallurgy was a science quite unknown to Roger; he only considered gold as heavy as lead, and therefore probably as fusible: so down he bustled, made another hole, a deeper one too this time, in the floor under the dresser, where, exhausted with his toil and care, he deposited the crock by four in the morning,—and so retired once more.

All in vain,—nobody ever knew when Black Burke might be returning from his sporting expeditions,—and that beast of a lurcher would be sure to be creeping in this morning, and would scratch it up, and his brute of a master would get it all! This fancy was the worst possible: and Roger rose again, quite sick at heart, pale, worn, and trembling with a miser's haggard joys. Where should he hide that crock,—the epithet "cursed" crock escaped him this time in his vexed impatience. In the house and in the garden, it was equally unsafe.

Ha! a bright thought indeed: the hollow in the elm-tree, creaking overhead, just above the second arm: so the poor, shivering wretch, almost unclad, swarmed up that slimy elm, and dropped his treasure in the hollow. Confusion! how deep it was: he never thought of that; here was indeed something too much of safety: and then those boys of neighbor Goode's were birds'-nesting continually, specially round the lake this spring. What an idiot he was not to have remembered this! And up he climbed again, thrust in his arm to the shoulder, and managed to re-possess himself a fifth time of that blessed crock.

Would that the elm had been hollow to its root, and beneath the root a chasm bottomless, and that Plutus in that Narbonne jar had served as a supper to Pluto in the shades! Better had it been for thee, my Roger.

But he had not hid it yet; so, that night,—or rather that cold morning about six, the drenched, half-frozen Fortunatus carried it to bed with him: and a precious warming-pan it made: for nothing would satisfy the finder of its presence but perpetual bodily contact:—accordingly, he placed it in his bosom, and it chilled him to the back-bone.

Yes; that was undoubtedly the safest way; to carry the spoil about with him; so, next noon,—how could he get up till noon after such a woful night?—next noon he emptied the jar, and tying up its contents in a handkerchief, proceeded to wear it as a girdle; for an hour, he clattered about the premises, making as much jingle as a waggoner's team of bells; laden heavily with gold, like the ἰβίβυστο genius in Herodotus: but he soon found out this would not do at all; for, independently of all concealment at an end, so long as his secret store was rattling as he walked louder than military spurs or sabre-tackle, he soberly reflected that he might,—possibly, possibly, though not probably, —get a glass too much again, by some mere accident or other; and then to be robbed of his golden girdle, this cincture of all joy! O terrible thought! as well [this is my fancy, not Rogers's] deprive Venus of her zone, and see how the beggared Queen of Beauty could exist without her treasury, the Cestus.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Investment.

NEXT day, the wealthy Roger had higher aspirations. Why should not he get interest for his money, like lords and gentlefolk? His gold had been lying idle too long; more fool he: it ought to breed money somehow, he knew that; for, like most poor men whose sole experience of investment is connected with the Lombard's golden balls, he took exalted views of usury. Was he to be "hiding up his talent in a napkin—?"

Ah!—he remembered and applied the holy parable, but it smote across his heart like a flash of frost, a chilling recollection of good things past and gone. What had he been doing with his talents,—for he once possessed the ten? had he not squandered piety, purity, and patience? where were now his gratitude to God, his benevolence to man? the father's duteous care, the husband's industry and kindness, the laborer's faith, the Christian's hope,—who had spent all these?—Till money's love came in, and money-store to feed it, the poor man had been rich: but now, rotten to the core, by lust of gold, the rich is poor indeed.

However, such considerations did not long afflict him,—for we know that lookers-on see more than players,—and if Roger had encouraged half our wise and sober thoughts, he might have been a better man: but Roger quelled the thoughts, and silenced them; and thoughts are tender intonations, shy little buzzing sounds, soon scared by coarser noise: Roger had no mind to cherish those small fowls; so they flew back again to Heaven's gate, homeless and uncomforted, as weeping Peris.

The bank,—the county bank,—Shark, Breakem, and Company,—this was the specious Eldorado, the genuine gold increaser, the hive where he would store his wealth (as honey left for the bees in winter), and was to have it soon returned fourfold. It was indeed a thought to make the rich man glad.

that all his shining heap was just like a sample of seed-corn, and the pocketful should next year fill a sack. How grudgingly he now began to mourn over past extravagance, five pieces gone within the week! how close and careful he resolved to be in future! how he would scrape and economise to get and save but one more of those sweet little seeds, that yield more gold, —more gold! And if Roger had been privileged in youth to have fed upon the wisdom of the Eton Latin grammar, he could have now quoted with some experimental unction the "*Crescit Amor*" line, which everybody well knows how to finish. Truly, it was growing with his growth, and rioting in strength above his weakness.

Swollen with this expanding love, he packed up his money in what were, though he knew it not, *rouleaux*, but to his plebeian eyes looked more like golden sausages: and he would take it to the bank, and they should bow to him, and Sir him, and give him forthwith more than he had brought; and if those summary gains were middling great,—say twice as much to be moderate,—he thought he might afford himself a chaise coming back, and return to Hurstley Common like a Nabob. Thus, full of wealthy fancies, after one glass more, off set Roger to the county town, with his treasure in a bundle.

Halfway to it, as hospitality has ordained to be the case wherever there be halfways, occurred a public-house: and really, notwithstanding all our monied neophyte's economical resolutions, his throat was so "uncommon dry," that he needs must stop there to refresh the muscles of his larynx: so, putting down his bundle on the settle, he called for a foaming tankard, and thanking the crock, as his evil wont now was, sat down to drink and think. Here was prosperity indeed, a flood of astonishing good fortune: that he, but a little week agone, a dirty ditcher,—so was he pleased to designate his former self,—a ragged wretch, little better than a tramp, should be now progressing like a monarch, with a mighty bag of gold to enrich his county town. To enrich, and be thereby the richer; for Roger's notions of finance were so simple, as to run the risk of being called sublimely indistinct: he took it as an axiom that "money bred money," but in what way to draw forth its generative properties,

whether or not by some new-fangled manure, he was entirely ignorant; and it clearly was his wisdom to leave all that mystery of money-making solely to the banker. All he cared about was this: to come back richer than he came,—and lo! how rich he was already. Lolling at high noon, on a Wednesday too, in the extremest mode of rustic beauism, with a bag of gold by his side and a pot of porter in his hand,—here was an accumulation of magnificence,—all the prepositions pressed into his service. His wildest hopes exceeded, and almost nothing left to wish. Blown up with the pride and importance of the moment, and some little oblivious from the potent porter,—he had paid, and sallied forth, and marched a mile upon his way full of golden fancies, a rich luxurious lord as he was,—when all on a sudden the hallucination crossed his dull pellucid mind, that he had left the store behind him! O pungent terror!—O most exquisite torture! was it clean gone, stolen, lost, lost, lost for ever? Rushing back in an agony of fear, that made the ruddy hostess think him crazed, with his hair on end and a face as if it had been whitewashed, he flew to the tap-room, and—almost fainted for ecstacy of joy when he found it, where he had laid it, on the settle!

Better had you lost it, Roger; better had your ecstacy been sorrow: there is more trouble yet for you, from that bad crock of gold. But if your lesson is not learnt, and you still think otherwise, go on a little while exultingly as now I see you, and hug the treasure to your heart,—the treasure that will bring you yet more misery.

And now the town is gained, the Bank approached. What! that big, barred, guarded place, looking like a mighty mouse-trap?—he didn't half like to venture in. At last he pushed the door ajar, and took a peep; there were muskets over the mantelpiece, ostentatiously ticketed as "Loaded! Beware!" there were leather buckets ranged around the walls: he did not in any degree like it: was he to expose his treasure in this idiot fashion to all the avowed danger of fire and thieves? However, since he had come so far, he would get some interest for his money, that he would,—so he'd just make bold to step to

the counter and ask a very obsequious bald-headed gentleman, who sired him quite affably,

"How much, Master, will you be pleased to give me for my gold?"

The gentleman looked queerish, as if he did not comprehend the question, and answered, "Oh certainly, sir, certainly,—we do not object to give you our notes for it," at the same time producing an extremely dirty bundle of worn-out bits of paper.

Roger stroked his chin.

"But, Master, my meaning is, not how many o' them brown bits o' paper you'll sell me for my gold here," and he exhibited a greater store than Mr. Breakem had seen at once upon his counter for a year, "but how much more gold you'll send me back with than what I've brought? by way of interest, you know, or some such law: for I don't know much about the Funds, Master."

"Indeed, sir," replied the civil banker, who wished by any means to catch the clodpole's spoil,—"you are very obliging; we shall be glad to allow you two-and-a-half per centum per annum for the deposit you are good enough to leave in our keeping."

"Leave in your keeping, Master,—no, I didn't say that; by your leave, I'll keep it myself."

"In that case, sir, I really do not see how I can do business with you."

True enough; and Roger would never have been such a monetary blockhead, had he not been now so generally tipsy; the fumes of beer had mingled with his plan, and all his usual shrewdness had been blunted into folly by greediness of lucre on the one side, and potent liquors on the other. The moment that the banker's parting speech had reached his ear, the absurdity of Roger's scheme was evident even to himself, and with a bare, "Good day, Master," he hurriedly took his bundle from the counter, and scuttled out as quick as he could.

His feelings, walking homewards, were anything but pleasant; the bubble of his ardent hope was burst: he never could have more than the paltry little sum he carried in that bundle: what a miser he would be of it: how mean it now seemed in his

eyes,—a mere sample-bag of seed, instead of the wide-waving harvest! Ah, well; he would save and scrape,—ay, and go back to toil again,—do anything rather than spend.

Got home, the difficulty now recurred, where was he to hide it? The store was a greater care than ever, now those rascally bankers knew of it. He racked his brain to find a hiding-place, and, at length, really hit upon a good one. He concealed the crock, now replenished with its contents, in the thatch just over his bed's head: it was a rescued darling: so he tore a deep hole, and nested it quite snugly.

Perhaps it did not matter much, but the rain leaked in by that hole all night, and fortunate Roger woke in the morning drenched with wet, and racked by rheumatism.

CHAPTER XIX.

Calumny.

More blessings issue from the crock; Pandora's box is set wide open, and all the sweet inhabitants come forth. If apprehensions for its safety made the finder full of care, the increased whisperings of the neighborhood gave him even deeper reason for anxiety. In vain he told lie upon lie about a legacy of some old uncle in the clouds; in vain he stuck to the foolish and transparent falsehood, with a dogged pertinacity that appealed, not to reason, but to blows; in vain he made affirmation weaker by his oath, and oaths quite unconvincing by his cudgel: no one believed him: and the mystery was rendered more inexplicable from his evidently nervous state and uneasy terror of discovery.

He had resolved at the outset, cunningly as he fancied, to change no more than one piece of gold in the same place; though Bacchus's undoubtedly proved the rule by furnishing an exception: and the consequence came to be that there was not a single shop in the whole country town, nor a farmhouse in all the neighborhood round, where Roger Acton had not called to change a sovereign. True, the silver had seldom been forthcoming; still he had asked for it; and where in life could he have got the gold? Many was the rude questioner, whose curiosity had been quenched in drink; many the insufferable pryer, whom club-law had been called upon to silence. Meanwhile, Roger steadily kept on, accumulating silver where he could: for his covetous mind delighted in the mere semblance of an increase to his store, and took some untutored numismatic interest in those pretty variations of his idol,—money.

But if Roger's heap increased, so did the whispers and suspicions of the country round: they daily grew louder, and more

clamorous; and soon the charitable nature of chagrined wonder assumed a shape more heartrending to the wretched finder of that golden hoard, than any other care, or fear, or sin, that hitherto had torn him. It only was a miracle that the neighbors had not thought of it before; seldom is the world so unsuspicious: but then honest Roger's forty years of character were something,—they could scarcely think the man so base; and above all, gentle Grace was such a favorite with all, was such a pattern of purity, and kindliness, and female conduct, that the tongue would have blistered to its roots, that had uttered scorn of her, till now. As things were, though, could anything be clearer? Was charity herself to blame in putting one and one together?—Sir John was rich, was young, gay, and handsome; Grace was poor,—but indisputably beautiful, and probably had once been innocent: some had seen her going to the Hall at strange times and seasons,—for in truth, she often did go there, Jonathan, and Sarah Stack of course, were her dearest friends on earth: and so it came to pass, that, through the blessing of the crock, honest Roger was believed to live on the golden wages of his daughter's shame! Oh coarse and heartless imputation! Oh bitter price to pay for secresy and wonderful good fortune! In vain the wretched father stormed, and swore, and knocked down more than one foul-spoken fellow that had breathed against dear Grace. None but credited the lie, and many envious wretches actually gloried in the scandal; I grieve to say that women,—divers venerable virgins,—rejoiced that this pert hussey was at last found out; she was too pretty to be good, too pious to be pure; now at length they were revenged upon her beauty; now they had their triumph over one that was righteous overmuch. For other people; they would urge the reasonable question, how else came Roger by the cash? and getting no answer, or worse than none, a prevaricating mystifying mere put-off,—they had hardly an alternative in common exercise of judgment: therefore, "Shame on her," said the neighbors, "and bitterest shame on him:" and the gaffers and grand-dames shook their heads virtuously.

Yet worse: there was another suggestion, by no means contradictory, though simultaneous: what had become of Tom? ay,

—that bold young fellow, Thomas Acton, Ben Burke's friend: why was he away so long, hiding out of the country? they wondered.

The suspected Damon and Pythias had gone a county off to certain fens, and were, during this important week, engaged in a long process of ensnaring ducks.

Old Gaffer White had muttered something to Gossip Heartley, which Dick the Tanner overheard, wherein Tom Acton and a gun, and Burke, and burglary, and throats cut, and bags of gold were conspicuous ingredients: so that Roger Acton's own dear Tom, that eagle-eyed and handsome better image of himself, stood accused, before his quailing father's face, of robbery and murder.

Both, both darlings, dead Annie's little orphaned pets, thus stricken by one stone to infamy! Grace, scouted as a hussey, an outcast, a bad girl, a wanton,——blessed angel! Thomas, generous boy, keenly looked for, in his near return, to be seized by rude hands, manacled, and dragged away, and tried on suspicion as a felon—for what?—that crock of gold. Yet Roger heard it all—knew it all—writhed at it all, as if scorpions were lashing him; but still he held on grimly, keeping that bad secret. Should he blab it out, and so be poor again, and lose the crock?

That our laborer's changed estate influenced his bodily health, under this accumulated misery and desperate excitement, began to be made manifest to all. The sturdy husbandman was transformed into a tremulous drunkard; the contented cottager, into a querulous hypochondriac; the calm religious patient Christian, into a tumultuous blasphemer: could all this be, and even Roger's iron frame stand up against the battle? No, the strength of Samson has been shorn. The crock has poured a blessing on its finder's very skin, as when the devil covered Job with boils.

CHAPTER XX.

The Bailiff's Visit.

ONE day at noon, ere the first week well was over since the fortunate discovery of gold, as Roger lay upon his bed, recovering from an overnight's excess, tossed with fever, vexation, and anxiety, he was at once surprised and frightened by a visit from no less a personage than Mr. Simon Jennings. And this was the occasion of his presence:—

Directly the gathering storm of rumors had collected to that focus of all calumny, the destruction of female character and murder charged upon the innocent, Grace Acton had resolved upon her course; secresy could be kept no longer;—her duty now appeared to be, to publish the story of her father's lucky find.

Grace, we may observe, had never been bound to silence, but only imposed it on herself from motives of tenderness to one, whom she believed to be taken in the toils of a temptation. She, simple soul, knew nothing of manorial rights, nor wotted she that any could despoil her father of his money; but even if such thoughts had ever crossed her mind, she loathed the gold that had brought so much trouble on them all, and cared not how soon it was got rid of. Her father's health, honor, happiness, were obviously at stake; perhaps also, her brother's very life: and, as for herself, the martyr of calumny looked piously to heaven, offered up her outraged heart, and resolved to stem this torrent of misfortune. Accordingly, with a noble indignation worthy of her, she had gone straightway to the Hall, to see the baronet, to tell the truth, fling aside a charge which she could scarcely comprehend, and openly vindicate her offended honor. She failed,—many may imagine happily for her own peace, if Sir John had not been better than his friends,—in gaining access to the Lord of Hurstley; but she did

see Mr. Jennings, who serenely interposed, and listened to all she came to say,—"her father had been unfortunate enough to find a crock of money on the lake side near his garden."

When Jennings heard the tale, he started as if stung by a wasp: and urging Grace to tell it no one else (though the poor girl "must," she said, "for honor's sake"), he took up his hat, and ran off breathlessly to Acton's cottage. Roger was at home, in bed, and sick; there was no escape; and Simon chuckled at the lucky chance. So he crept in, carefully shut the door, put his finger on his lips to hush Roger's note of admiration at so little wished a vision; and then, with one of his accustomed scared and fearful looks behind him, muttered under his breath,

"Man, that gold is mine: I have paid its price to the uttermost; give me the honey-pot."

Roger's first answer was a vulgar oath; but his tipsy courage faded soon away before old habits of subserviency, and he faltered out,

"I,—I,—Muster Jennings, I've got no pot of gold."

"Man, you lie: you have got the money: give it me at once, —and—" he added in a low hoarse voice, "we will not say a word about the murder."

"Murder!" echoed the astonished man.

"Ay, murder, Acton:—off, off, I say!" he muttered parenthetically, then wrestled for a minute violently as with something in the air, and recovering as from a spasm, calmly added,

"Ay, murder for the money."

"I—I—" gasped Roger, "I did no murder, Muster Jennings."

A new light seemed to break upon the bailiff, and he answered with a tone of fixed determination,

"Acton, you are the murderer of Bridget Quarles."

Roger's jaw dropped, dismay was painted on his features, and certainly he did look guilty enough:—but Simon proceeded in a tenderer tone;

"Notwithstanding, give me the gold, Acton, and none shall know a word about the murder. We will keep all quiet, Roger Action, all nice and quiet, you know;" and he added, coaxingly, "come, Roger, give me up this crock of gold."

"Never!" with a fierce anathema, answered our hero, now

himself again: the horrid accusation had entranced him for awhile, but this coaxing strain roused up all the man in him: "Never!" and another oath confirmed it.

"Acton, give it up, I say," was shouted in rejoinder, and Jennings glared over him with his round and staring eyes as he lay faint upon his bed,—"Give up the crock, or else—"

"Else what? you whitened villain."

The bailiff flung himself at Roger's neck, and almost shrieked, "I'll serve you as I—"

There was a tremendous struggle; attacked at unawares, for the moment he was nearly mastered; but Acton's tall and wiry frame soon overpowered the excited Jennings, and long before you have read what I have written—he has leaped out of bed,—seized,—doubled up,—and flung the battered bailiff headlong down the narrow staircase to the bottom. This done, Roger, looking like Don Quixote de la Mancha in his penitential shirt, mounted into bed again, and quietly lay down; wondering, half sober, at the strange and sudden squall.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Capture.

He had not long to wonder. Jennings got up instantly, despite of bruises, posted to the Hall, took a search-warrant from Sir John's study (they were always ready signed, and Jennings filled one up), and returned with a brace of constables to search the cottage.

Then Roger, as he lay musing, fancied he heard men's voices below, and his wife, who had just come in, talking to them; what could they want? tramps, perhaps: or Ben? he shuddered at the possibility; with Tom too; and he felt ashamed to meet his son. So he turned his face to the wall, and lay musing on,—he hadn't been drinking too much overnight, Oh no, it was sickness, and rheumatics, and care about the crock; Tom should be told that he was very ill, poor father! Just as he had planned this, and resolved to keep his secret from that poaching ruffian Burke, some one came creeping up the stairs, slided in at the door, and said to him in a deep whisper from the further end of the room,

"Acton, give me the gold, and the men shall go away; it is not yet too late: tell me where to find the crock of gold."

An oath was the reply; and, at a sign from Jennings, up came the other two.

"We have searched everywhere, Mr. Simon Jennings, both cot and garden; ground disturbed in two or three places, but nothing under it; in-doors too, the floor is broken by the hearth and by the dresser, but no signs of anything there: now, Master Acton, tell us where it is, man, and save us all the trouble."

Roger's newly-learnt vocabulary of oaths was drawn upon again.

"Did you look in the ash-pit?" asked Jennings.

"No, sir."

"Well, while you two search this chamber, I will examine it myself."

Mr. Jennings apparently entertained a wholesome fear of Acton's powers of wrestling.

Up came Simon in a hurry back again, with a lot of little empty leather bags he had raked out, and—the fragment of a shawl! the edges burnt, it was a corner bit, and marked B. Q.

"What do you call this, sir?" asked the exulting bailiff.

"Curse that Burke,"—thought Roger; but he said nothing.

And the two men upstairs had searched, and pried, and hunted everywhere in vain; the knotty mattrass had been ripped up, the chimney scrutinized, the floor examined, the bedclothes overhauled, and as for the thatch, if it hadn't been for Roger Acton's constant glance upwards at his treasure in the roof, I am sure they never would have found it. But they did at last; there it was, the crock of gold, full proof of robbery and murder!

"Aha!" said Simon in a complacent triumph, "Mrs. Quarles's identical honey-pot, full of her clean bright gold, and many pieces still encased in those tidy leather bags;" and his round eyes glistened again; but all at once, with a hurried look over his left shoulder, he exclaimed involuntarily in a very different tone, "Ha! away, I say!—" Then he snatched the crock up eagerly, and nursed it like a child.

"Come along with us, Master Acton, you're wanted somewhere else; up, man, look alive, will you."

And Roger dressed himself mechanically. It was no manner of use, not in the least worth while resisting, innocent though he was; his treasure had been found and taken from him; he had nothing more to live for; his gold was gone,—his god; where was the wisdom of fighting for anything else; let them take him to prison if they would, to the jail, to the gallows, to anywhither, now his gold was gone. So he put on his clothes without a murmur, and went with them as quiet as a lamb.

Never was there a clearer case; the housekeeper's hoard had been found in his possession, with a fragment of her shawl; and Sir John Vincent was very well aware of the mystery attending the old woman's death; besides, he was in a great hurry to be

off, for Pointer, and Silliphant, and Lord George Pypp were to have a hurdle race with him that day, for a heavy bet, so he really had not time to go deep into the matter; and, the result of five minutes' talk before the magisterial chairs (Squire Ryle having been summoned to assist) was, that, on the accusation of Simon Jennings, Roger Acton was fully committed to the county jail, to be tried at next Assizes, for Bridget Quarles's murder.

Thank God! poor Roger, it has come to this. What other way than this was there to save thee from thy sin, to raise thee from thy fall? Where else but in a prison, could you get the silent solitary hours leading you again to wholesome thought, and deep repentance? Where else could you escape the companionship of all those loose and low associates, sottish brawlers, ignorant and sensual unbelievers, vagabond radicals, and other lewd fellows of the baser sort, that had drank themselves drunk at your expense, and sworn to you as captain? The place, the time, the means for penitence are here. The crisis of thy destiny is come.

Honest Roger, Steady Acton, did I not see thy guardian angel, —after all his many tears, aggrieved and broken spirit!—did I not see him lift his swollen eyes in gratitude to heaven and benevolence to thee, and smile a smile of hopeful joy when that damned crock was found?

Gladly could he thank his Lord, to behold the temptation at an end.

Did I not see the Devil slink away from thee abashed, issuing like an adder from thy heart, and then, with a sudden Protean change, driven from thy hovel as a thundercloud dispersing, when Simon Jennings seized the jar, hugged it as his household-god,—and took it home with him,—and counted out the gold,—and locked the bloody treasure in his iron-chest?

Fitly did the murderer lock up curses with his spoil.

And when God smote thine idol, dashing Dagon to the ground, and thy heart was sore with disappointment and tender as a peeled fig, when hope was dead for earth, and conscience dared not look beyond it, ah, Roger, did I judge amiss when I saw, or

thought I saw, those eyes full of humble shame, those lips quivering with remorseful sorrow?

We will leave thee in the cold stone cell,—with thy well-named angel Grace to comfort thee, and pray with thee, and help thee back to God again, and so repay the debt that a daughter owes her father.

Happy prison! where the air is sweetened by the frankincense of piety, and the pavement gemmed with the flowers of hope, and the ceiling arched with heaven's bow of mercy, and the walls hung around with the dewy drapery of penitence!

Happy prison! where the talents that were lost are being found again, gathered in humility from this stone floor; where poor-making riches are banished from the postern, and rich-making poverty streameth in as light from the grated window; where care vexeth not now the laborer emptied of his gold, and calumny's black tooth no longer gnaws the heart-strings of the innocent.

Hark! it is the turnkey, coming round to leave the pittance for the day: he is bringing in something in an earthen jar. Speak, Roger Acton, which will you choose, man,—a prisoner's mess of pottage,—or a crock of gold?

CHAPTER XXII.

The Aunt and her Nephew.

WHILE we leave Roger Acton in the 'ting for the very near assizes, and wearing every hour away in penitence and prayer, it will be needful to our story that we take a retrospective glance at certain events of no slight importance.

I must now speak of things, of which there is no human witness; recording words, and deeds, whereof Heaven alone is cognizant, Heaven alone—and Hell! For there are secret matters, which the murdered cannot tell us, and the murderer dare not,—let him confess as fully as he will. Therefore, with some omnipresent sense, some invisible ubiquity, I must note down scenes as they occurred, whether mortal eye has witnessed them, or not; I must lay bare secret thoughts, unlatch the hidden chambers of the heart, and duly set out, as they successively arose, the idea which tongue had not embodied, the feeling which no action had expressed.

Hitherto, we have pretty well preserved inviolate the three grand unities, time, place, circumstance: and even now we do not sin against the first and chiefest, however we may seem so to sin: for, had it suited my purpose to have begun with the beginning and to have placed the present revelations foremost, the strictest stickler for the unities would have only had to praise my orthodox adherence to them. As it is, I have chosen, for interest sake, to shuffle my cards a little; and two knaves happen to have turned up together just at this time and place. The time is just three weeks ago,—a week before the baronet came of age, and a fortnight antecedent to the finding of the crock; which, as we know, after blessing Roger for a se'nnight, has at last left him in jail. The place is the cozy housekeeper's room at Hurstley: and the brace of thorough knaves, to enact then

and there as *dramatis personæ*, includes Mistress Bridget Quarles, a fat, sturdy, bluffy old woman, of a jolly laugh withal, and a noisy tongue,—and our esteemed acquaintance Mister Simon Jennings. The aunt, housekeeper, had invited the nephew butler, to take a dish of tea with her, and rum-punch had now succeeded the souchong.

"Well, aunt Quarles, is it your meaning to undertake a new master?"

"Don't know, nephy,—can't say yet what he 'll be like: if he 'll leave us as we are, won't say won't."

"Ay, as we are, indeed; comfortable quarters, and some little to put by, too: a pretty penny you will have laid up all this while, I'll be bound: I wager you now it is good five hundred, aunt,—come, done for a shilling."

"Get along, foolish boy, a'n't you o' the tribe o' wisdom too, ha, ha, ha!"

"I will not say," smirked Simon, "that my nest has not a feather."

"It 's easy work for us, Nep.; we hunt in couples: you the men, and I the maids,—ha, ha!"

"Tush, Aunt Bridget, that speech is not quite gallant, I fear." And the worshipful extortioners giggled jovially.

"But i'ts true enough for all that, Simon: how d'ye manage it, eh, boy? much like me, I s'pose; wages every quarter from the maids, dues from tradesmen Christmas-tide and Easter, regular as parson Evans's; pretty little bits tacked on weekly to the bills, beside presents from everybody; and so, boy, my poor forty pound a-year soon mounts up to a hundred."

"Ay, ay, Aunt Bridget,—but I get the start of you, though you probably were born a week before-hand: talk of parsons, look at me, a regular grand pluralist monopolist, as any bishop can be; butler in doors, bailiff out of doors, land-steward, house-steward, cellar-man, and paymaster. I am not all this for naught, Aunt Quarles: if so much goes through my fingers, it is but fair that something stick."

"True, Simon, O certainly; but if you come to boasting, my boy, I don't carry this big bunch o' keys for nothing neither. Lord love you,—why merely for cribbings in the linen-line for

one month, John Draper swapped me that there shawl: none o' my clothes ever cost me a penny, and I a'n't quite as bare as a newborn babby neither. Look at them trunks, bless you."

"Ay, ay, aunt, I'll be bound the printer of your prayer-book has left out a 'not,' before the 'steal,' eh?—ha! ha!"

"Fie, naughty Simon, fie, them 's not stealings, them 's parquisites. Where 's the good o' living in a great house else? But come, Si, haven't you struck out the 'not,' for yourself, though the printer did his dooty, eh, Nep?"

"Not a bit, aunt, not a bit: all sheer honesty and industry. Look at my pretty little truck shop down the village. Wo betide the laborer that leaves off dealing there; not one that works at Hurstley, but eats my bread and bacon, besides the 'tea, coffee, tobacco, and snuff.'"

"Pretty fairish articles, eh? I never dealt with you, Si: no, Nep, no,—you never saw the color o' my money."

Jennings gave a start, as if a thought had pricked him, but gaily recovering himself, said,

"Oh, as to pretty fairish, I know there is one thing about the bacon good enough; ay, and the bread too: the very best of prices; ha! ha! is not that good? And for the other genuine articles, I don't know that much of the tea comes from China,—and the coffee is sold ground because it is burnt maize,—and there 's a plenty of wholesome cabbage leaf cut up in the tobacco,—while as for snuff, I give them a dry peppery choky sneezy dust, and I dare say that it does its duty."

It was astonishing how innocently the worthy couple laughed together.

"My only trouble, Aunt Quarles, is where to keep my gains,—what to do with them. I am quite driven to the strong-box system, interest is so bad; and as to speculations, they are nervous things and sicken one. I invest in the Great Western one day,—a tunnel falls in, so I sell my shares the next, and send the proceeds to Australia; then looking at the map I see the island isn't clean chalked out all round, and beginning to fear the sea will get in where it an't made water-tight by the Admiralty, I call the money home again. You see I don't know

what to do with gold when I get it. Where do you keep yours now, aunt, I wonder ?"

"O Nep, never mind me; you rattle on so I can't get in never a word. I'll only tell you where I don't keep it. Not at Breakem's bank, for they 're brewers, and hosiers, and chandlers, and horse-dealers, ay, and swindlers too, the whole 'company' on 'em; not in mortgages, for I hate the very smell of a lawyer, with all his pounce and parchment: not in Gover'me't 'nuities, for I'm a old 'ooman, boy; and not in the Three per Cents, nor any other per cents, for I've sense enough to know that my highest interest lies in counting out, as my first principle is dropping in." And the fat female laughed herself purple at the venerable joke.

Simon was a courtier, and laughed too, as immoderately as possible.

"Ah! I dare say now you have got a Chubb's patent somewhere full of gold ?" he asked somewhat anxiously; "take your punch, aunt, wont you; I do not see you drink."

"Simon, mark me; fools who want to be robbed put their money into an iron chest, that thieves may know exactly where to find it; they might as well ticket it 'cash,' and advertise to Newgate,—come and steal. I know a little better than to be such a fool."

"Yes, certainly,—I dare say now you keep it in your workbox, or sew it up in your stays, or hide it in the mattress, or in an old tea-pot, may-be;" and Jennings eyed her narrowly.

"Nephew, what rhymes to money ?"

"Money!—Well, I can't say I am a poet,—stony, perhaps. At least," added the benevolent individual, "when I have raised a wretch's rent to gain a little more by him, stony is not a bad shield to lift against prayers, and tears, and orphans, and widows, and starvation, and all such nonsense."

"Not bad, neither, Nep: but there 's a better rhyme than that."

"You cannot mean honey, aunt ? when I guessed stony, I thought you might have some snug little cash cellar under the flags. But honey ? are you such a thorough Mrs. Rundle as to

pickle and preserve your very guineas, the same as you do strawberries or apricots in syrup?"

"Oh, you clever little fool, how prettily you do talk on: your tongue 's as tidy as your cash book: when you 've any money to put by, come to Aunt Bridget for a crock to hide it in: mayn't one use a honey-pot, as Teddy Rourke would say, barring the honey?"

"Ha! and so you hide the hoard up there, aunt, eh? along with the preserves in a honey-pot, do you?"

"We'll see, we'll see, some o' these long days; not that the money 's to be yours, Nep,—you 're rich enough, and don't wan't it; there 's your poor sister Scott with her fourteen children, and Aunt Bridget must give her a lift in life: she was a good niece to me, Simon, and never left my side before she married: may-be she 'll have cause to bless the dead."

Jennings hardly spoke a word more; but drained his glass in silence, got up a sudden stomach-ache, and wished his aunt good-night.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Schemes.

We must follow Simon Jennings to his room. He felt keenly disappointed. Money was the idol of his heart, as it is of many million others. He had robbed, lied, extorted, tyrannized; he had earned scorn, ill report, and hatred; nay, he had even diligently gone to work and lost his own self-love and self-respect, in the service of his darling idol. He was at once, for lucre's sake, the mean cringing fawner, and the pitiless iron despot; to the rich he could play supple parasite, while the poor man only knew him as an unrelenting persecutor; with the good, and they were chiefly of the fairer softer sex, he walked in meekness the spiritual hypocrite; the whilst it was his boast to overreach the worst in low duplicity and crooked dealing. All this he was for gold. When the eye of the world was on him, and intuition warned him of the times, he was ever the serene, the correct, with a smooth tongue and an oily smile; but in the privacy of some poor hovel, where his debtor sued for indulgence, or some victim of his passions (he had more depravities than one) threw her wretched self upon his pity, then could Simon Jennings lash sternness into rage, and heat his brazen heart with the embers of inveterate malice. It was as if the serpent, that voluble insinuating reptile, which had power to fascinate poor Eve, turned to rend her when she had fallen, erect, with flashing eyes, and bristling crest, with venomed fangs, and hissing. Behold, snake-worshippers of Mexico, the prototype of your grim idol, in Mammon's model slave, and specimen disciple!

Such a man was Simon Jennings, a soul given up to gold,—exclusively to gold; for, although, as we have hinted, and as hereafter may appear, he could sell himself at times to other sins, still these were but as stars in his evil firmament, while

covetousness ruled it like the Sun; or, if the beauteous stars and blessed sun be an image too hallowed for his wickedness, we may find a fitter in some stagnant pool, where the pestilential vapor over all is Mammonism, and the dull fat weeds that rot beneath, are pride, craftiness, and lechery. In fact, to speak of passions in a heart such as his, were a palpable misnomer; all was reduced to calculation; his rage was fostered to intimidate, and where the wretch seemed kinder, his kindnesses were aimed at power, as an object, rather than at pleasure—the power to obtain more gold.

For it is a dreadful truth (which I would not dare to utter if such crimes had never been), that a reprobate of the bailiff Jennings' stamp may, by debts, or fines, or kind usurious loans, entrap a beggared creature in his toils; and then lyingly propose remission at the secret sacrifice of honor, in some one, over whom that dastard beggar has control; and having this point gained, the seducer is quite capable of using for still more extortion, the power which a threatening of exposure gives, when the criminally weak has stooped to sin, on promises of silence and delivery from ruin. I wish there may be no poor yeoman in this broad land, of honorable name withal, he and his progenitors for ages, who can tell the tale of his own base fears, a creditor's exactions, and some dependant victim's degradation; some orphaned niece, some friendless ward, immolated in her earliest youth at the shrine of blackhearted Mammon; I wish there may be no sleek middleman guilty of the crimes here charged upon Simon Jennings.

This worthy, then, had been introduced at Hurstley by his aunt, Mrs. Quarles, on the occurrence of a death vacancy in the lad-of-all-work department, during the long ungoverned space of young Sir John's minority. As the precious "lad" grew older, and divers indoor potentates died off, the housekeeper had power to push her nephew on to pageship, footmanship, and divers other similar crafts, even to the final post of butler; whilst his own endeavors, backed by his aunt's interest, managed to secure for him the rule out of doors no less than in, and the closest possible access to guardians and landlord, to the tenants—and their rent.

Now, the amiable Mrs. Quarles had contrived the elevation of

her nephew, and connived at his monopolies, mainly to fit in cleverly with her own worldly weal; for it would never have done to have risked the loss of innumerable perquisites, and other peculations, by the possible advent of an honest butler. But, while the worshipful Simon, to do him only justice, fully answered Mrs. Bridget's purpose, and even added much to her emoluments; still he was no mere derivative scion, but an independent plant, and entertained views of his own. He had his own designs, and laid himself out to entrap his aunt's affections; or rather, for I cannot say he greatly valued these, to secure her good graces, and worm himself within the gilded clauses of her will; she was an old woman, rolling in gold, no doubt had a will, and as for himself, he was younger by five and thirty years, so he could afford to wait a little, before trying on her shoes. The petty schemes of thievery and cheating, which he in his Quotem capacities had practised, were to his eyes but as driblets of wealth, in comparison with the mighty stream of his old aunt's savings. Not that he had done amiss, trust him; but then he knew the amount of his own hoard to a farthing, whilst of hers he was entirely ignorant; so, on the principle of 'omne ignotum pro mirifico,' he pondered on its vastness with indefinite amazement, although probably it might not reach the quarter of his own. For it should in common charity be stated, that, with all her hiding and hiving propensities, Mrs. Quarles, however usually a screw, was by fits and starts an extravagant woman, and besides spendings on herself, had occasionally helped her own kith and kin; poor niece Scott, in particular, had unconsciously come in for many pleasant pilferings, and had to thank her good aunt for innumerable filched groceries, and hosieries, and other largesses, which (the latter in especial) really had contributed, with sundry other more self-indulgent expenses, to make no small havoc of the store.

Still, this store was Simon's one main chance, chief prize in his hope's lottery; and it was with a pang, indeed, that he found all his endeavors to compass its possession had been vain. Was that endless cribbage nothing, and the weary bible-lessons on a Sunday, and the constant fetchings and carryings, and the forced smiles, sham congratulations, and other hypocritical affections,

fearing for his dear aunt's dropsy, and inquiring so much about her bunions,—was all this dull servitude to meet with no reward? With none? worse than none! Fool that he was, had he schemed, and plotted, and flattered, and cozened, ay, and given away many pretty little presents, lost decoys, that had cost hard money, all for nothing, less than nothing, to be laughed at and postponed to his methodist sister Scott? The impudence of deliberately telling him he "didn't want it, and was rich enough!" as if "enough" could ever be good grammar after such a monosyllable as "rich;" and "want it" indeed! of course he wanted it; if not, why had he slaved so many years? want it, indeed! if to hope by day, and to dream by night, if to leave no means untried of delicately showing how he longed for it, if to grow sick with care, and thin with coveting,—if this were to want the gold, good sooth, he wanted it. Don't tell him of starving brats, his own very bowels pined for it; don't thrust in his face the necessities of others, the necessity is his; he must have it, he will have it;—talk of necessity!

Wait a bit: is there no way of managing some better end to all this? no mode of giving the right turn to that wheel of fortune round which his cares and calculations have been hovering so long? Is there no conceivable method of possessing that vast hoard?

Bless me! how huge it must be! and Simon turned whiter at the thought: only add up Mother Quarles's income for fifty-five years: she is seventy-five at least, and came here a girl of twenty. Simon's hair stood on end, and his heart went like a mill-clapper, as he mentally figured out the sum.

Is there no possibility of contriving matters so, that I may be the architect of my own good luck, and no thanks at all to the old witch there? Dear,—what a glorious fancy,—let me think a little. Cannot I get at the huge hoard somehow?

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Devil's Counsel.

"STEAL it," said the Devil.

Simon was all of a twitter; for though he fancied his own heart said it, still his ear-drum rattled, as if somebody had spoken.

Simon,—that ear-drum was to put you off your guard: the deaf can hear the devil: he needs no tympanum to commune with the spirit: listen again, Simon; your own thoughts echo every word.

"Steal it: hide in her room, you know she has a shower-bath there, which nobody has used for years, standing in a corner; two or three cloaks in it, nothing else: it locks inside, how lucky: ensconce yourself there, watch the old woman to sleep,—what a fat heavy sleeper she is!—quietly take her keys, and steal the store: remember, it is a honey-pot. Nothing 's easier,—or safer. Who 'd suspect you?"

"Splendid! and as good as done," triumphantly exclaimed the nephew, snapping his fingers, and prancing with glee;—"a glorious fancy! bless my lucky star!"

If there be a planet Lucifer, that was Simon's lucky star.

And so, Mrs. Quarles, the biter is going to be bit, eh? It generally is so in this world's government. You, who brought in your estimable nephew to aid and abet in your own dishonest ways, are, it seems, going to be robbed of all your knavish gains by him. This is taking the wise in their own craftiness, I reckon: and richly you deserve to lose all your ill-got hoard. At the same time, Mrs. Quarles,—I will be just,—there are worse people in the world than you are: in comparison with your nephew I consider you a grosser kind of angel; and I really hope no harm may befall your old bones beyond the loss of your money. However, if vou are to lose this, it is my wish that poor

Mrs. Scott, or some other honest body, may get it, and not Simon; or, rather, I should not object that he may get it first, and get hung for getting it, too, before the sister has the hoard.

Our friend, Simon Jennings, could not sleep that night; his reveries and scheming lasted from the rum-punch's final drop, at ten p. m., to circiter two, a. m., and then, or thenabouts, the devil hinted "steal it;" and so, not till nearly four, he began to shut his eyes and dream again, as his usual fashion was, of adding up receipts in five figures, and of counting out old Bridget's hoarded gold.

Next day, notwithstanding nocturnal semi-sleeplessness, he awoke as brisk as a bee, got up in as exhilarated a state as any gas-balloon, and was thought to be either surprisingly in spirits, or spirits surprisingly in him; none knew which, "where each seemed either." That whole day long, he did the awkwardest things, and acted in the most absent manner possible; Jonathan thought Mr. Simon was beside himself; Sarah Stack, foolish thing, said he was in love, and was observed to look in the glass several times herself; other people did not know what to think,—it was quite a mystery. To recount only a few of his unprecedented exploits on that day of anticipative bliss:

First, he asked the porter how his gout was, and gave him a thimbleful of whiskey from his private store.

Secondly, he paid Widow Soper one whole week's washing in full, without the smallest deduction or per centage.

Thirdly, he ordered of Richard Buckle, commonly called Dick the Tanner, a lot of cart harness, without haggling for price, or even asking it.

And, fourthly, he presented old George White, who was coming round with a subscription paper for a dead pig, actually, he presented old Gaffer White with the sum of twopence out of his own pocket! never was such careless prodigality.

But the little world of Hurstley did not know what we know. They possessed no clue to the secret happiness wherewithal Simon Jennings hugged himself; they had no inkling of the crock of gold; they thought not he was going to be suddenly so rich; they saw no cause, as we do, why he should feel to be like a great heir on the eve of his majority; they wotted not

that Sir John Devereux Vincent, Baronet, had scarcely more agreeable or triumphant feelings when his clock struck twenty-one, than Simon Jennings, butler, as the hour of his hope drew nigh.

If a destiny like this man's can ever have a crisis, the hour of his hope is that; but downward still, into a lower gulf, has been continually his bad career; there is (unless a miracle intervene) no stopping in the slope on which he glides, albeit there may be precipices. He that rushes in his sledge down the artificial icehills of St. Petersburgh, skims along not more swiftly, than Jennings, from the altitude of infant innocence, had sheered into the depth of fullgrown depravity; but even he can fall, and reach, with startling suddenness, a lower deep.

As if that Russian mountain, hewn asunder midway, were fitted flush to a Norwegian cliff, beetling precipitately over the whirlpool; then tilt the sledge with its furred inmate over the slope, let it skim with quicker impetus the smoking ice, let it touch that beetling edge, and, leaping from the tangent, let it dart through the air, let it strike the eddying waters, be sucked hurriedly down that hoarse black throat, wind among the roots of the everlasting hills, and split upon the loadstone of the centre!

Even such a fate, "down, down to hell," will come to Simon Jennings; wrapped in the furs of complacency, seated in the sledge of covetousness, adown the slippery launch of well-worn evil habit,—over the precipice of crime,—into the billows of impenitent remorse,—to be swallowed by the vortex of Gehenna!

CHAPTER XXV.

The Ambuscade.

NIGHT came, and with it all black thoughts. Not that they were black at once, any more than darkness leaps upon the back of noon, without the intervening cloak of twilight. Oh dear, no; Simon's thoughts accommodated themselves fitly to the time of day. They had been, for him, at early morning, pretty middling white, that is whity-brown; thence they passed, with the passing hour kindly, through the shades of burnt sienna, raw umber, and bistre; until, just as we may notice in the case of marking ink, that, which five minutes ago was as water only delicately dirtied, has become a fixed and indelible black.

Simon was resolved upon the spoil, come what might; although his waking sensations of buoyancy, his noonday cogitations of a calmer kind, and his eventide determined scheming, had now given way to a nervous and unpleasant trepidation. So he poured spirits down, to keep his spirits up. Very early after dark, he had watched his opportunity while Mrs. Quarles was scolding in the kitchen, had slipped shoeless and unperceived, from his pantry into the housekeeper's room, and locked himself securely in the shower bath. Hapless wight! it was very little after six yet, and there he must stand till twelve or so: his foresight had not calculated this, and the devil had already begun to cheat him. But he would go through with it now; no flinching, though his rabbit back is breaking with fatigue, and his knocked knees totter with exhaustion, and his haggard eyes swim dizzily, and his bad heart is failing him for fear.

Yes, fear, and with good reason too for fear; "nothing easier, nothing safer," said his black adviser; how easily for bodily

pains, how safely for chances of detection, was he getting at the promised crock of gold!

"Mr. Jennings! Mr. Simon! where in the world was Mr. Jennings?" nobody knew; he must have gone out somewhere. Strange too, and left his hat and greatcoat.

Here 's a general for an ambuscade; Oh Simon, Simon, you have had the whole day to think of it,—how is it that both you and your Dark Friend overlooked in your calculations the certainty of search, and the chance of a discovery? the veriest schoolboy, when he hid himself, would hide his hat. I am half afraid that you are in that demented state, which befits the wretch ordained to perish.

But where is Mr. Jennings? that was the continued cry for four agonizing hours of dread and difficulty. Sarah the still-room maid was sitting at her work, unluckily, in Mrs. Quarles's room; she had come in shortly after Simon's secret entry; there she sat, and he dared not stir. And they looked everywhere, except in the right place; to do the devil justice, it was a capital hiding-corner that; rooms, closets, passages, cellars, out-houses, gardens, lofts, tenements, and all the "general words," in a voluminous conveyance, were searched and searched in vain; more than one groom expected (hoped is the truer word) to find Mr. Jennings hanging by a halter from the stable-lamp; more than one exhilarated laborer, hastily summoned for the search, was sounding the waters with a rake and a rope, in no slight excitement at the thought of fishing up a deceased bailiff.

It was a terrible time for the ensconced one: sometimes he thought of coming out, and treating the affair as a bit of pleasantry: but then the devil had taken off his shoes, as a Glasgow captain deals with his cargo of refractory Irishers; how could he explain that? his abominable old aunt was shrewd, and he knew how clearly she would guess at the truth; if he desired to make sure of losing every chance, he could come out now and reveal himself; but if he nourished still the hope of counting out that crock of gold, he 'll bide where he is, and trust to —to—to fate. The wretch had "providence" on his blistered tongue.

If, under the circumstances, anything could be added to

Simon's gratification, such pleasing addition was afforded in overhearing, as Lord Brougham did, the effect which his rumored death produced on the minds of those who best had known him. It so happened, Sarah was sick, and did not join in the universal hunt; accordingly being the only audience, divers ambassadors came to tell her constantly the same most welcome news, that Jennings had not yet been found.

"Lawk, Sally," said a helper,—"what a blessing it 'll be, if that mean old thief's dead; I'll go to town, if 'tis so, get a dozen Guy's-day rockets, tie 'em round with crape, and spin 'em over the larches: that 'll be funeral fun won't it? and it 'll sarve to tell the neighbors of our luck in getting rid on him."

"I doan't like your thought, Tom," said another staider youth: "it's ill mirth playing leap-frog over tomb-stones, and poor bravery insulting the dead. Besides, I'm a thinking the bad man that's taken from us an't a going up'ards, so it's no use lending him a light. I wish we all may lie in a cooler grave than he does, and not have to go quite so deep downard."

"Gee up for Lady-day!" exclaimed the emancipated coachman; "why, Sall, I shall touch my whole lump of wages free for the fust time: and I only wish the gals had our luck."

"Here, Sarah," interposed a kind and ruddy stable youth, "as we're all making free with Mr. Simon's own special ale, I've thought to bring you a noggin on't: come, you're not so sick as you can't drink with all the rest on us, The bailiff, and may none on us never see his face no more!"

These, and similar testimonials to the estimation in which Simon's character was held, must have gratified not a little the hearer of his own laudations: now and then, he winced so that Sarah might have heard him move: but her ear was alive to nothing but the news-bringers, and her eyes appeared to be fixed upon the linen she was darning. That Jennings vowed vengeance, and wreaked it afterwards too, on the youths that so had shown their love, was his solitary pleasure in the shower-bath. But his critics were too numerous for him to punish all: they numbered every soul in the house, besides the summoned aiders, —only excepting three: Sarah, who really had a headache, and made but little answer to the numerous glad envoys; Jona-

than Floyd, whose charity did not altogether hate the man, and who really felt alarmed at his absence; and chiefest, Mrs. Quarles, who evinced more affection for her nephew than any thought him worthy of exciting:—she wrung her hands, wept, offered rewards, bustled about everywhere, and kept calling blubberingly for "Simon,—poor dear Simon."

At length, that fearful hue and cry began to subside,—the hubbub came to be quieter: neighbor-folks went home, and inmates went to bed. Sarah Stack put aside her work, and left the room.

What a relief to that hidden caitiff! his feet, standing on the cold damp iron so many hours, bare of brogues, were mere ice, only that they ached intolerably: he had not dared to move, to breathe, and was all over in one cramp: he did not bring the brandy-bottle with him, as he once had planned; for calculation whispered,—"don't, your head will be the clearer; you must not muddle your brains," and so his caution over-reached itself, as usual; his head was in a fog, and his brains in a whirlwind, for lack of other stimulants than fear and pain.

O Simon, how your prudence cheats you: five mortal hours of anguish and anxiety in one unalterable posture without a single drop of creature-comfort: and all this preconcerted too!

CHAPTER XXVI.

Preliminaries.

At last, just as the nephew was positively fainting from exhaustion, in came his kind old aunt to bed. She talked a good deal to herself, did Mrs. Quarles, and Simon heard her say,

"Poor fellow, poor dear Simon, he was taken bad last night, and has seemed queerish in the head all day: pray God nothing's amiss with the boy!"

The boy's heart (he was forty) smote him as he heard: yes, even he was vexed that Aunt Bridget could be so foolishly fond of him. But he would go on now, and not have all his toil for nothing. "I'm in for it," said he, "and there's an end."

Ay, Simon, you are, indeed, in for it; the devil has locked you in;—but as to the end, we shall see, we shall see.

"I shouldn't wonder now," the good old soul went on to say, "if Simon's wentured out without his hat to cool a headache: his grandfather, peace be with him, died, poor man, in a Lunacy 'Sylum: alack, Si, I wish you mayn't be going the same road. No, no, I hope not,—he's always so prudent like, and wise, and good; so kind too, to a poor old fool like me:" and the poor old fool began to cry again.

"Silly boy,—but he'll take cold at any rate: Sarah!" here Mrs. Quarles rung her bell, and the still-maid answered it. "Sarah Stack, sit up awhile for Mr. Jennings, and when he comes in, send him here to me. Poor boy," she went on soliloquising, "he shall have a drop or two to comfort his stomach, and keep the chill out."

The poor boy, lying perdu, shuddered at the word chill, and really wished his aunt would hold her tongue. But she didn't.

"May-be now," the affectionate old creature proceeded, "may-be Simon was vexed at what I let drop last night about the

money. I know he loves his sister Scott, as I do: but it'll seem hard, too, to leave him nothing. I must make my will some day, I 'spose; but don't half like the job: it's always so nigh death. Yes, yes, dear Si shall have a snug little corner."

The real Simon Pure in his own snug little corner writhed again. Mrs. Quarles started at the noise, looked up the chimney, under the bed, tried the doors and windows, and actually went so near the mark as to turn the handle of the shower-bath; "Drat it," said she, "Sarah must ha' took away the key: well, there can't be nothing there but cloaks, that's one comfort."

Last of all, a thought struck her,—it must have been a mouse at the preserves. And Mrs. Quarles forthwith opened the important cupboard, where Jennings now well knew the idol of his heart was shrined. Then another thought struck Mrs. Quarles, though probably no unusual one, and she seemed to have mounted on a chair, and to be bringing down some elevated piece of crockery. Simon could see nothing with his eyes, but his ears made up for them: if ever Dr. Elliotson produced clairvoyance in the sisters Okey, the same sharpened apprehensions ministered to the inner man of Simon Jennings through the instrumental magnet of his inordinately covetous desires. Therefore, though his retina bore no picture of the scene, the feelers of his mind went forth, informing him of everything that happened.

Down came a Narbonne honey-pot,—Simon saw that first, and it was as the lamp of Aladdin in his eyes: then the bladder was whipped off, and the crock set open on the table. Jennings, mad as Darius's horse at the sight of the object he so longed for, once thought of rushing from his hiding-place, taking the hoard by a *coup de main*, and running off straightway to America: but—deary me!—that'll never do; I mustn't leave my own strong-box behind me, say nothing of hat and shoes: and if I stop for anything, she'd raise the house.

While this was passing through the immaculate mind of Simon Jennings, Bridget had been cutting up an old glove, and had made one of its fingers into a very tidy little leather sacklet; into this she deposited a bright half sovereign, spoil of the day, being the douceur of a needy brushmaker, who wished to keep

custom, and, of course, charged all these vails on the current bill for mops and stable-sponges.

"Ha!" muttered she, "it's your last bill here, Mr. Scrubb, I can tell you: so, you were going to put me off with a crown-piece, were you? and actually that bit of gold might as well have been a drop of blood wrung from you: yes, yes, Mr. Scrubb, I could see that plainly; and so you've done for yourself."

Then, having sewed up the clever little bag, she dropped it into the crock: there was no jingle, all dumby: prudent that in his aunt,—for the dear morsels of gold were worth such tender keeping, and the leather would hinder them from wear and tear, set aside the clink being silenced. So, the nephew secretly thanked Bridget for the wrinkle, and thought how pleasant it would be to stuff old gloves with his own yellow store. Ah yes, he would do that,—to-morrow morning.

Meanwhile, the pig-skin is put on again, and the honey-pot stored away: and Simon instinctively stood a tip-toe to peep ideally into that wealthy corner cupboard. His mind's eye seemed to see more honey-pots! Mammon help us! can they all be full of gold? why, any one of them would hold a thousand pounds. And Simon scratched the palms of his hands, and licked his lips at the thought of so much honey.

But see, Mrs. Quarles has, in her peculiar fashion, undressed herself: that is to say, she has taken off her outergown, her cap and wig,—and then has *added* to the volume of her under garments, divers night habiliments, flannelled and frilled: whilst wrappers, manifold as a turbaned Turk's, protect earache, tooth-ache, head-ache, and faceache, from the elves of night.

And now that the bedstead creaks beneath her weight (as well it may, for Bridget is a burden like Behemeth), Simon's heart goes thump so loud, that it was a wonder the poor woman never heard it. That heart in its hard pulsations sounded to me like the carpenter hammering on her coffin lid: I marvel that she did not take it for a death-watch tapping to warn her of her end. But no: Simon held his hand against his heart to keep it quiet: he was so very fearful the pitapating would betray him. Never mind, Simon, don't be afraid; she is fast asleep already; and her snore is to thee as it were the challenge of a trumpeter calling to the conflict.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Robbery.

HUSH,—hush,—hush!

Stealthily on tiptoe, with finger on his lips, that foredoomed man crept out.

"The key is in the cupboard still,—ha! how lucky; saves time that, and trouble, and—and—risk! Oh, no,—there can be no risk now," and the wretch added, "thank God!"

The devil loves such piety as this.

So Simon quietly turned the key, and set the cupboard open: it was to him a Bluebeard's chamber, a cave of the Forty Thieves, a garden of the Genius in Aladdin, a mysterious secret treasure-house of wealth uncounted and unseen.

What a galaxy of pickle-pots! tier behind tier of undoubted currant-jelly, ranged like the houses in Algiers! vasty jars of gooseberry! delicate little cupping-glasses full of syruped fruits! Yet all these candied joys, which probably enhance a Mrs. Rundle's heaven, were as nothing in the eyes of Simon,—sweet trash, for all he cared they might be vulgar treacle. His ken saw nothing but the honey-pots,—embarrassing array,—a round dozen of them! All alike, all posted in a brown line, like stout Dutch sentinels with their hands in their breeches pockets, and set aloft on that same high-reached shelf. Must he really take them all? impracticable: a positive sack full. What's to be done?—which is he to leave behind? that old witch contrived this identity and multitude for safety's sake. But what if he left the wrong one,—and got clear off with the valuable booty of two dozen pounds of honey? Confusion! that'll never do: he must take them all, or none; all, all's the word; and forthwith, as tenderly as possible, the puzzled thief took down eleven pots of honey to his one of gold,—all pig-bladdered, all Fort-

numed,—all slimy at the string; "confound that cunning old Aunt of mine," said Simon aloud; and took no notice that the snores surceased.

Then did he spread upon the table a certain shawl, and set the crocks in order on it: and it was quite impossible to leave behind that pretty ostentatious "Savings' Bank," which the shrewd hoarder kept as a feint to lure thieves from her hidden gold, by an open exhibition of her silver:—unluckily, though, the shillings, not being leathered up nor branned, rattled like a Mandarin toy, as the trembling hand of Jennings deposited the Bank beside the crockeries,—and, at the well-known sound, I observed (though Simon did not, as he was in a trance of addled triumph), or fancied I observed Mrs. Quarles's head move: but as she said nothing perhaps I was mistaken. Thus stood Simon at the table, surveying his extraordinary spoils.

And while he looked, the Mercy of God, which never yet hath seen the soul too guilty for salvation, spake to him kindly and whispered in his ear, "Poor deluded man,—there is yet a moment for escape,—flee from this temptation; put all back again,—hasten to thy room, to thy prayers, repent, repent: even thou shalt be forgiven, and none but God, who will forgive thee, shall know of this bad crime. Turn now from all thy sins; the gate of bliss is open, if thou wilt but lift the latch."

It was one moment of irresolute delay; on that hinge hung Eternity. The gate swung upon its pivot, that should shut out hell, or heaven!

Simon knit his brow,—bit his nails,—and answered quite out loud, "What? and after all to lose the crock of Gold?"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Murder.

He had waked her!

In an instant the angel form of Mercy melted away,—and there stood the devil with his arms folded.

Murder!—fire!—rape!—thieves!—what, Nephew Jennings, is that you, with all my honey-pots? Help! help! help!

"Phew-w-w!" whistled the devil: "I tell you what, Master Simon, you must quiet the old woman, she bellows like a bull, the house 'll be about your ears in a twinkling—she'll hang you for this!"

Yes, he must quiet her,—the game was up; he threatened, he implored, but she would shriek on; she slept alone on the ground-floor, and knew she must roar loudly to be heard above the drawing-rooms; she would not be quieted—she would shriek—and she did. What must he do? she'll raise the house!—Stop her mouth, stop her mouth, I say, can't you?—No, she's a powerful, stout, heavy woman, and he cannot hold her: ha! she has bitten his finger to the bone, like a very tigress! look at the blood!

"Why can't you touch her throat, no teeth there, bless you? that's the way the wind comes: bravo! grasp it,—tighter! tighter! tighter!"

She struggled, and writhed, and wrestled, and fought,—but all was strangling silence; they rolled about the floor together, tumbled on the bed, scuffled round the room, but all in horrid silence; neither uttered a sound, neither had a shoe on,—but all was earnest, wicked, death-dealing silence.

Ha! the desperate victim has the best of it; gripe harder, Jennings; she has twisted her fingers in your neckcloth, and you yourself are choking: fool! squeeze the swallow, can't you?

try to make your fingers meet in the middle,—lower down, lower down, grasp the gullet, not the ears, man,—that's right; I told you so, tighter, tighter, tighter! again; ha, ha, ha, bravo! bravo!—tighter, tighter, tighter!

At length the hideous fight was coming to an end—though a hungry constrictor battling with the huge rhinoceros, and crushing his mailed ribs beneath its folds, could not have been so fierce or fearful; fewer now, and fainter are her struggles; that face is livid blue,—the eyes have started out and goggle horribly; the tongue protrudes, swollen and black. Aha! there is another convulsive effort,—how strong she is still! can you hold her, Simon?—can he?—All the fiend possessed him now with savage exultation: can he?—only look! gripe, gripe still, you are conquering, strong man! she is getting weaker, weaker; here is your reward, gold! gold! a mighty store uncounted; one more grasp, and it is all your own,—relent now, she hangs you. Come, make short work of it, break her neck,—gripe harder,—back with her, back with her, here against the bedstead: keep her down, down I say,—she must not rise again. Crack! went a little something in her neck,—did you hear it? There's the death-rattle, the last smothery complicated gasp—what, didn't you hear that?

And the devil congratulated Simon on his victory.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Reward.

TILL the wretch had done the deed, he scarcely knew that it was doing. It was a horrid, mad excitement, where the soul had spread its wings upon the whirlwind, and heeded not whither it was hurried. A terrible necessity had seemed to spur him onwards all the while, and one thing so succeeded to another, that he scarce could stop at any but the first. From the moment he had hidden in the shower-bath (but for God's interposing mercy), his doom appeared to have been sealed,—robbery, murder, false witness, and—damnation!

Crime is the rushing rapid, which, but for some kind miracle, inevitably carries on through circling eddies, and a foamy swinging tide, to the cataract of death and wo: haste, poor fisherman of Erie, paddle hard back, stem the torrent, cling to the shore, hold on tight by this friendly bough; know you not whither the headlong current drives? hear you not the roar of many waters, the maddening rush as of an ocean disenthralled? feel you not the earth trembling at the thunder,—see you not the heaven clouded o'er with spray? Helpless wretch,—thy frail canoe has leapt that dizzy water-cliff, Niagara!

But if, in doing that fell deed, madness raged upon the minutes, now that it was done—all still, all calm, all quiet, Terror held the hour-glass of Time. There lay the corpse, motionless, though coiled and cramped in the attitude of struggling agony; and the murderer gazed upon his victim with a horror most intense. Fly! fly!—he dared not stop to think: fly! fly! anywhither,—as you are—wait for nothing; fly! thou caitiff, for thy life! So he caught up the blood-bought spoils, and was fumbling with shaky fingers at the handle of the garden door, when the unseen Tempter whispered in his ear,

"I say, Simon, did not your aunt die of apoplexy?"

O kind and wise suggestion! O lightsome, tranquillizing thought! Thanks! thanks! thanks!—And if the arch fiend had revealed himself in person at the moment, Simon would have worshipped at his feet.

"But," and as he communed with his own black heart, there needed now no Devil for his prompter,—"if this matter is to be believed, I must contrive a little, that it may look likelier. Let me see:—yes, we must lay all tidy, and the old witch shall have died in her sleep; apoplexy! capital indeed; no telltales either; well, I must set to work."

Can mortal mind conceive that sickening office?—To face the strangled corpse, yet warm; to lift the fearful burden in his arms, and order out the heavily-yielding limbs in the ease of an innocent sleep? To arrange the bed, smoothe down the tumbled coverlid, set everything straight about the room, and erase all tokens of that dread encounter? It needed nerves of iron, a heart all stone, a cool, clear head, a strong arm, a mindful, self-protecting spirit; but all these requisites came to Simon's aid upon the instant; frozen up with fear, his heartstrings worked that puppet-man rigidly as wires; guilt supplied a reckless energy, a wild physical power, which actuates no human frame but one saturate with crime, or madness; and in the midst of those terrific details, the murderer's judgment was so calm and so collected, that nothing was forgotten, nothing unconsidered,—unless, indeed, it were that he out-generalled himself by making all too tidy to be natural. Hence, suspicion at the inquest; for the "apoplexy" thought was really such a good one, that, but for so exact a laying out, the fat old corpse might have easily been buried without one surmise of the way she met her end. Again and again, in the history of crimes, it is seen that a "Judas hangs himself;" and albeit, as we know, the murderer has hitherto escaped detection, still his own dark hour shall arrive in its due place.

The dreadful office done, he asked himself again, or may be took counsel of the Devil (for that evil master always cheats his servants), "What shall I do with my reward, this crock—these crocks of gold? It might be easy to hide one of them, but not

all; and as to leaving any behind, that I won't do. About opening them, to see which is which—"

"I tell you what," said the Tempter, as the clock struck three, "whatever you do, make haste; by morning's dawn the house and garden will be searched, no doubt, and the crocks found in your possession. Listen to me, I'm your friend, bless you! remember the apoplexy. Pike Island yonder is an unfrequented place, take the punt, hide all there now, and go at your best leisure to examine afterwards; but whatever you do, make haste, my man."

Then Jennings crept out by the lawn-door, thereby rousing the house-dog; but he skirted the laurels in their shadow, and it was dark and mizzling, so he reached the punt both quickly and easily.

The quiet and the gloom, and the dropping rain, strangely affected him now, as he plied his punt-pole; once he could have wept in his remorse, and another time he almost shrieked in fear. How lonesome it seemed! how dreadful! and that death-dyed face behind him—ha! woman, away I say! But he neared the island, and, all shoeless as he was, crept up its muddy bank.

"Hallo! nybor, who be you a poaching on my manor, eh? that bean't good manners any how."

Ben Burke has told us all the rest.

But, when Burke had got his spoils, when the biter had been bitten, the robber robbed, the murderer stripped of his murdered victim's money, when the bereaved miscreant, sullenly returning in the dark damp night, tracked again the way he came upon that lonely lake, no one yet has told us, none can rightly tell, the feelings which oppressed that God-forsaken man. He seemed to feel himself even as a sponge, which the Evil One had bloated with his breath, had soaked it then in blood, had squeezed it dry again, and flung away! He was Satan's broken tool,—a weed pulled up by the roots, and tossed upon the fire; alone, alone in all the universe, without countenance or sympathy from God, or man, or devil; he yearned to find, were it but a fiend to back him, but in vain;—they held aloof, he could see them vaguely through the gloom,—he could hear them mock-

ing him aloud amongst the patter of the rain-drops,—ha! ha! ha!—the pilfered fool!

Bitterly did he rue his crime, fearfully he thought upon its near discovery, madly did he beat his miserable breast, to find that he had been baulked of his reward, yet spent his soul to earn it.

Oh,—when the house-dog bayed at him returning, how he wished he was that dog! he went to him, speaking kindly to him, for he envied that dog:—"Good dog,—good dog!"

But more than envy kept him lingering there: the wretched man did it for delay, yes, though morn was breaking on the hills,—one more, one more moment of most precious time.

CHAPTER XXX.

Second Thoughts.

FOR,—again must he go through that room!

No other entrance is open,—not a window, not a door: all close as a prison: and only by the way he went, by the same must he return.

He trembled all over, as a palsied man, when he touched the lock: with stiffening hair, and staring eyes, he peeped in at that well remembered chamber: he entered,—and crept close up to the corpse, stealthily and dreadingly,—horror!—what if she be alive still?

SHE WAS.

Not quite dead, not quite dead yet! a gurgling in the bruised throat, a shadowy gleam of light and life in those protruded eyes, an irregular convulsive heaving at the chest: she might recover! what a fearful hope: and, if she did, would hang him,—ha!—he went nearer;—she was muttering something in a moanful way,—it was, "Simon did it, Simon did it, Simon did it, Si—Si—Simon did—" he should be found out!

Yet once again, for the last time, the long suffering Mercy of the Lord stood like Balaam's Angel in the way, pleading with that miserable man at the bedside of her whom he had strangled. And even then, that Guardian Spirit came not with chiding on his tongue, but He uttered words of Hope, while his eyes were streaming with sorrow and with pity.

"Most wretched of the sinful sons of men, even now there may be mercy for thee, even now plenteous forgiveness. True, thou must die, and pay the earthly penalty of crimes like thine: but do My righteous bidding, and thy soul shall live. Go to that poor suffocating creature, cherish the spark of life, bind up the wounds which thou hast rent, pouring in oil and wine:

rouse the house, seek assistance, save her life, confess thy sin, repent, and though thou diest for this before the tribunal of thy fellows, God will yet be gracious,—he will raise again her whom thou hadst slain,—and will cleanse thy bloodstained soul."

Thus in Simon's ear spake that better conscience.

But the reprobate had cast off Faith; he could not pledge the Present for the Future; he shuddered at the sword of Justice, and would not touch the ivory sceptre of Forgiveness. No: he meditated horrid iteration,—and again the Fiend possessed him! What? not only lose the crock of gold, but all his own bright store? and give up everything of this world's good for some imaginary other, and meekly confess, and meanly repent,—and, and, all this to resuscitate that hated old Aunt of his, who would hang him, and divorce him from his gold?

No; he must do the deed again,—see, she is moving,—she will recover! her chest heaves visibly,—she breathes,—she speaks,—she knows me,—ha! down, down, I say!

Then, with deliberate and damning resolution; to screen off temporal danger, and count his golden hoards a little longer; that awful criminal touched the throat again: and he turned his head away not to see that horrid face, clutched the swollen gullet with his icy hands, and strangled her once more!

"This time all is safe," said Simon; and having set all smooth as before, he stole up to his own chamber.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Mammon, and Contentment.

Ay, safe enough: and the murderer went to bed. To bed? No.

He tumbled about the clothes, to make it seem that he had lain there: but he dared neither lie down, nor shut his eyes. Then, the darkness terrified him: the outdoor darkness he could have borne, and Mrs. Quarles's chamber always had a night-lamp burning: but the darkness of his own room, of his own thoughts, pressed him all around, as with a thick murky suffocating vapor. So, he stood close by the window, watching the daybreak.

As for sleep, never more did wholesome sleep revisit that atrocious mind: laudanum, an ever increasing dose of merciless laudanum, that was the only power which ever seemed to soothe him. For a horrid vision always accompanied him now: go where he might, do what he would, from that black morning to eternity, he went a haunted man, a scared, sleepless, horror-stricken wretch. That livid face with goggling eyes, stuck to him like a shadow: he always felt its presence, and sometimes, also, could perceive it as if bodily, peeping over his shoulder, next his cheek; it dodged him by day, and was his incubus by night; and often he would start and wrestle, for the desperate grasp of the dying appeared to be clutching at his throat: so, in his ghostly fears, and bloody conscience, he had girded round his neck a piece of thin sheet iron in his cravat, which he wore continually as armor against those clammy fingers: no wonder that he held his head so stiff.

O Gold, accursed Mammon! is this the state of those who love thee deepest? is this their joy, who desire thee with all their heart and soul, who serve thee with all their might, who toil for thee, plot for thee, live for thee, dare for thee, die for thee? Hast thou no better bliss to give thy martyrs, no choicer comfort

for thy most consistent worshippers, no fairer fate for those, whose waking thoughts, and dreaming hopes, and intricate schemes, and desperate deeds, were only aimed at gold, more gold ?—god of this world, if such be thy rewards,—let me ever escape them ! idol of the knave, false deity of the fool, if this be thy blessing on thy votaries,—come, curse me, Mammon, curse thou me !

For, "The love of money is the root of all evil." It groweth up a little plant of coveting; presently the leaves get rank, the branches spread, and feed on petty thefts; then in their early season come the blossoms, black designs, plots, involved and undeveloped yet, of foul conspiracies, extortions on the weak, rich robbings of the wealthy, the threatened slander, the rewarded lie, malice, perjury, sacrilege; then speedily cometh on the climax, the consummate flower, dark-red murder: and the fruit bearing in itself the seeds that never die, is righteous wrathful condemnation.

Dyed with all manner of iniquity, tinged with many colors like the Mohawk in his woods, goeth forth in a morning the covetous soul. His cheek is white with envy, his brow black with jealous rage, his livid lips are full of lust, his thievish hands spotted over with the crimson drops of murder. "The poison of asps is under his lips; and his feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in his ways; and there is no fear of God before his eyes."

O ye thousands, the covetous of this world's good, behold at what a fire ye do warm yourselves: dread it: even now, ye have imagined many deaths, whereby your gains may be the greater; ye have caught, in wishful fancy, many a parting sigh; ye have closed, in heartless reverie, many a glazing eye,—yea, —of those your very nearest, whom your hopes have done to death: and are ye guiltless? God and conscience be your judges!

Even now ye have compassed many frauds, connived at many meannesses, trodden down the good, and set the bad on high, all for gold, hard gold; and are ye the honest, the upright? Speak out manfully your excuse, if you can find one, ye respectables

of merchandise, ye traders, bartering all for cash, ye scribes, ye pharisees, hypocrites, all honorable men.

Even now, your dreams are full of money-bags; your cares are how to add superfluity to wealth; ye fawn upon the rich, ye scorn the poor, ye pine and toil both night and day for gold, more gold; and are ye happy? Answer me, ye covetous ones.

Yet are there righteous gains, God's blessing upon labor: yet is there rightful hope to get those righteous gains. Who can condemn the poor man's care, though Faith should make his load the lighter? And who will extenuate the rich man's coveting, whose appetite grows with what it feeds on? "Having food and raiment, be therewith content;" that is the golden mean; to that is limited the philosophy of worldliness: the man must live, by labor, and its earnings; but having wherewithal for him and his temperately, let him tie the mill-stone of anxiety to the wing of faith, and speed that burden to his God.

If Wealth come, beware of him, the smooth false friend: there is treachery in his proffered hand, his tongue is eloquent to tempt, lust of many harms is lurking in his eye, he hath a hollow heart; use him cautiously.

If Penury assail, fight against him stoutly, the gaunt grim foe: the curse of Cain is on his brow, toiling vainly; he creepeth with the worm by day, to raven with the wolf by night; diseases battle by his side, and crime followeth his footsteps. Therefore fight against him boldly, and be of a good courage, for there are many with thee; not alone the doled alms, the casual aids dropped from compassion, or wrung out by importunity; these be only temporary helps, and indulgence in them pampers the improvident; but look thou to a better host of strong allies, of resolute defenders; turn again to meet thy Duties, needy one: no man ever starved who even faintly tried to do them. Look to thy God, O sinner: use reason wisely; cherish honor: shrink not from toil, though somewhile unrewarded; preserve frank bearing with thy fellows; and in spite of all thy sins—forgiven; all thy follies—flung away; all the trickeries of this world—scorned; all competitions—disregarded; all suspicions trodden underfoot; thou neediest and raggedest of labor-

ers' laborers,—Enough shall be thy portion, ere a week hath passed away.

Well did Agur-the-Wise counsel Ithiel and Ucal his disciples, when he uttered in their ears before his God, this prayerful admonition, "Two things have I required of Thee; deny me them not before I die: remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches: feed me with food convenient for me. Lest I be full and deny Thee, saying, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and dishonor the name of the Lord my God."

CHAPTER XXXII.

Next Morning.

DAY dawned apace; and a glorious cavalcade of flaming clouds heralded the Sun their captain. From far away, round half the wide horizon, their glittering spears advanced. Heaven's highway rang with the trampling of their horsehoofs, and the dust went up from its jewelled pavement as spray from the bottom of a cataract. Anon, he came, he came, the chieftain of that onspurring host! his banner blazed upon the sky; his golden crest was seen beneath nodding with its ruddy plumes; over the southeastern hills he arose in radiant armor. Fair Nature, waking at her bridegroom's voice, arrived so early from a distant clime, smiled upon him sleepily, gladdening him in beauty with her sweet half-opened eyelids, and kissing him in faithfulness with dew-besprinkled lips.

And he looked forth upon the world from his high chariot, holding back the coursers that must mount the steep of noon: and he heard the morning hymn of thankfulness to Heaven from the mountains, and the valleys, and the islands of the sea; the prayer of man and woman, the praise of lisping tongues, the hum of insect joy upon the air, the sheepbell tinkling in the distance, the wild bird's carol, and the lowing kine, the mute minstrelsy of rising dews, and that stilly scarce-heard universal melody of wakeful plants and trees, hastening to turn their spring-buds to the light,—this was the anthem he, the Lord of Day, now listened to, this was the song his influences had raised to bless the God who made him.

And he saw, from his bright throne of wide derivative glory, Hope flying forth upon her morning missions, visiting the lonesome, comforting the sorrowful, speaking cheerfully to Care, and singing in the ear of Labor: and he watched that ever-welcome

friend, flitting with the gleams of light to every home, to every heart; none, but gladly let her in; her tapping finger opened the very prison doors; the heavy head of Sloth rejoiced to hear her call; and every common Folly, every common Sin, aye, every common Crime, warmed his unconscious soul before her winning beauty.

Yet, yet was there one, who cursed that angel's coming: and the holy Eve of day wept pityingly to see an awful child of man who dared not look on Hope.

The murderer stood beside his casement, watching that tranquil scene: with bloodshot eyes and haggard stare, he gazed upon the waking world; for one strange minute he forgot, entranced by innocence and beauty; but when the stunning tide of memory, that had ebbed that one strange minute, rolled back its mighty flood upon his mind, the murderer swooned away.

And he came to himself again all too soon; for when he arose, building up his weak, weak limbs as if he were a column of sand, the cruel Giant, Guilt, lifted up his club, and felled the wretch once more.

How long he lay fainting, he knew not then; if any one had vowed it was a century, Simon, as he gradually woke, could not have gainsaid the man; but he only lay four seconds in that white oblivious trance,—for Fear, Fear knocked at his heart:—Up, man, up, you need have all your wits about you now;—see, it is broad day,—the house will be roused before you know where you are, and then will be shouted out that awful name,—Simon Jennings! Simon Jennings!

CHAPTER XXXIII.

The Alarm.

He arose, held up on either hand that day as if fighting against Amalek;—despair buttressed him on one side, and secrecy shored him on the other: behind that wall of stone his heart had strength to beat.

He arose; and listened at the keyhole anxiously: all silent, quiet, quiet still: the whole house asleep: nothing found out yet. And he bit his nails to the quick, that they bled again: but he never felt the pain.

Hush!—yes, somebody's about: it is Jonathan's step; and hark, he is humming merrily, "Hail, smiling morn, that opes the gates of day!" Wo, wo,—what a dismal gulph between Jonathan and me! And he beat his breast miserably. But, Jonathan cannot find it out,—he never goes to Mrs. Quarles's room. Oh! this suspense is horrible: haste, haste, some kind soul, to make the dread discovery! And he tore his hair away by handfulls.

"Hark!—somebody else,—unlatching shutters; it will be Sarah,—ha! she is tapping at the housekeeper's room,—yes, yes, and she will make it known, O terrible joy!—A scream! it is Sarah's voice,—she has seen her dead, dead, dead;—but is she indeed dead?"

The miscreant quivered with new fears; she might still mutter "Simon did it!"

And now the house is thoroughly astir; running about in all directions; and shouting for help; and many knocking loudly at the murderer's own door,—"Mr. Jennings! Mr. Jennings!—quick,—get up,—come down,—quick, quick,—your aunt's found dead in her bed!"

What a relief to that trembling wretch!—she *was* dead. He

could have blessed the voice that told him his dread secret was so safe. But his parched tongue may never bless again: curses, curses are all its blessings now.

And Jennings came out calmly from his chamber a white, stern, sanctimonious man, lulling the storm with his wise presence:—"God's will be done," said he, "what can poor weak mortals answer Him?" And he played cleverly the pious elder, the dignified official, the affectionate nephew: "Ah, well, my humble friends, behold what life is: the best of us must come to this; my poor dear aunt, the late housekeeper, rest her soul,—I feared it might be this way some night or other: she was a stout woman, was our dear deceased Bridget,—and, though a good kind soul, lived much on meat and beer: ah well, ah well!" And he concealed his sentimental hypocrisy in a cotton pocket-handkerchief.

"Alas and well-a-day! that it should have come to this. Apoplexy,—you see, apoplexy caught her as she slept: we may as well get her buried at once: it is unfortunately too clear a case for any necessity to open the body; and our young master is coming down on Tuesday, and I could not allow my aunt's corpse to be so disrespectful as to stop till it became offensive. I will go to the vicar myself immediately."

"Begging pardon, Mr. Jennings," urged Jonathan Floyd, "there's a strange mark here about the throat, poor old 'ooman."

"Ay," added Sarah, "and now I come to think of it, Mrs. Quarles's room-door was ajar; and bless me, the lawn-door's not locked neither! Who could have murdered her?"

"Murdered? there's no murder here, silly wench," said Jennings with a nervous sneer.

"I don't know that, Mr. Simon," gruffly interposed the coachman; "it's a case for a coroner, I'll be bail: so here I goes to bring him: let all bide as it is, fellow-sarvents; murder will out, they say."

And off he set directly,—not without a shrewd remark from Mr. Jennings, about letting him escape that way; which seemed all very sage and likely, till the honest man came back within the hour, and a posse comitatus at his heels.

We all know the issue of that inquest.

Now, if any one requests to be informed how Jennings came to be looked for as usual in his room, after that unavailing search last night, I reply, this newer, stronger excitement for the minute made the house oblivious of that mystery; and if people further will persist to know, how that mystery of his absence was afterwards explained (though I for my part would gladly have said nothing of the bailiff's own excuse), let it be enough to hint, that Jennings winked with a knowing and gallant expression of face; alluded to his private key, and a secret return at two in the morning from some disreputable society in the neighborhood; made the men laugh, and the women blush; and, altogether, as he might well have other hats and coats, the delicate affair was not unlikely.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Doubts.

And so, this crock of gold,—gained through extortion, by the frauds of every day, the meannesses of every hour,—this concrete of oppression to the hireling in his wages, this mass of petty pilferings from poverty, this continuous obstruction to the charities of wealth, this cockatrice's egg, this offspring of iniquity, had already been baptized in blood before poor Acton found it, and slain its earthly victim ere it wrecked his faith;—already had been perfected by crime, and destroyed the murderer's soul, before it had endangered the life of slandered innocence.

Is there yet more blessing in the crock? more fearful interest still, to carry on its story to an end? Must another sacrifice bleed before the shrine of Mammon, and another head lie crushed beneath the heel of that monster, his disciple?

Come on with me and see the end; push further still, there is a labyrinth a-head to attract and to excite; from mind to mind crackles the electric spark; and when the heart thrillingly conceives, its children-thoughts are as arrows from the hand of the giant, flying through that mental world,—the hearts of other men. Fervent still from its hot internal source, this fountain gushes up; no sluggish Lethe-stream is here, dull, forgetful, and forgotten; but liker to the burning waves of Phlegethon, mingling at times (though its fire still unquenched), with the pastoral rills of Tempe, and the River from the Mount of God.

Lower the sail,—let it flap idly on the wind,—helm a-port,—and so to smoother waters: return to common life and humbler thoughts.

It may yet go hard with Roger Acton. Jennings is a man of character, especially the farther from his home; the county round take him for a model of propriety, a sample of the strict-

est conduct. We know the bad man better; but who dare breathe against the bailiff in his power, against the caitiff in his sleek hypocrisy, that, whilst he makes a show of both humilities, he fears not God nor man? What shall hinder, that the perjured wretch offer up to the Manes of the murdered the life-blood of the false-accused? May he not live yet many years, heaping up gold and crime? And may not sweet Grace Acton,—her now repentant father,—the kindly Jonathan,—his generous master, and if there be any other of the Hurstley folk we love, may they not all meet destruction at his hands, as a handful of corn before the reaper's sickle? I say not that they shall, but that they might. Acton's criminal state of mind, and his hunger after gold, gold anyhow, have earned some righteous retribution, unless Providence in mercy interpose; and young Sir John, in nowise unblameable himself, with wealth to tempt the spoiler, lives in the spoiler's very den; and as to Jonathan and Grace, this world has many martyrs. If heaven in its wisdom use the wicked as a sword, heaven is but just; but if in its vengeance that sword of the wicked is turned against himself, heaven showeth mercy all unmerited. To a criminal like Jennings, let loose upon the world, without the clog of conscience to retard him, and with the spur of covetousness ever urging on, anything in crime is possible, is probable: none can sound those depths: and when we raise our eyes on high to the Mighty Moral Governor, and note the clouds of mystery that thunder round His throne,—He may permit, or he may control: who shall reach those heights?

CHAPTER XXXV.

Fears.

MOREOVER, innocent of blood as we know Roger Acton to be, appearances are strongly against him: and in such a deed as secret midnight murder, which none but God can witness, multiplied appearances justify the world in condemning one who seems so guilty.

The first impression against Roger is a bad one, for all the neighbors know how strangely his character had been changing for the worse of late: he is not like the same man; sullen and insubordinate, he was turned away from work for his bold and free demeanor; as to church, though he had worn that little path these forty years, all at once he seems to have entirely forgotten the way hither.

He lives nobody knows how, on bright clean gold nobody knows whence: his daughter says, indeed, that her father found a crock of gold in his garden,—but she need not have held her tongue so long and borne so many insults, if that were all the truth; and, mark this! even though she says it and declares it on her bible oath, Acton himself most strenuously denied all such findings,—but went about with impudent tales of legacy, luck, nobody knows what;—the man prevaricated continually, and got angry when asked about it, cudgelling folks, and swearing like,—like any one but old-time "honest Roger."

Only look, too, where he lives: in a lone cottage opposite Pike Island, on the other side of which is Hurstley Hall, the scene of robbery and murder: was not a boat seen that night upon the lake? and was not the lawn-door open? How strangely stupid in the coroner and jury not to have imagined this before! how dull it was of everybody round not to have suspected murder rather more strongly, with those finger-marks about the

throat, and not to have opened their eyes a little wider, when the murderer's cottage was within five hundred yards of that open lawn-door!

Then again,—when Mr. Jennings, in his strict and searching way, accused the culprit, he never saw a man so confused in all his life! and on repeating the charge before those two constables, they all witnessed his guilty consternation: experienced men too, they were, and never saw a felon if Acton wasn't one; the dogged manner in which he went with them so quietly was quite sufficient; innocent men don't go to jail in that sort of way, as if they well deserved it.

But, strongest of all, if any shadow of a doubt remained, the most fearful proof of Roger's guilt lay in the scrap of shawl,—the little leather bags,—and the very identical crock of gold! There it was, nestled in the thatch, within a yard of his head, as he lay in bed at noonday guarding it.

One proof, weaker than the weakest of all these banded together, has ere now sufficed to hang the guilty;—and many, many fears have I that this multitude of seeming facts, conspiring in a focus against Roger Acton, will be quite enough to overwhelm the innocent. "Nothing lies like a fact," said Dr. Johnson: and statistics prove it, at least as well as circumstantial evidence.

The matter was as clear as daylight, and long before the trial came about, our poor laborer had been hanged outright in the just judgment of Hurstley-cum-Piggesworth.

CHAPTER XXXVI,

Prison Comforts.

MANY blessings, more than he had skill to count, had visited poor Acton in his cell. His gentle daughter Grace, sweet minister of good thoughts,—she, like a loving angel, had been God's instrument of penitence and peace to him. He had come to himself again, in solitude, by nights, as a man awakened from a feverish dream; and the hallowing ministrations of her company by day had blest reflective solitude with sympathy and counsel.

Good-wife Mary, too, had been his comforting and cheering friend. Immediately the crock of gold had been taken from its ambush in the thatch, it seemed as if the chill which had frozen up her heart had been melted by a sudden thaw. Roger Acton was no longer the selfish prodigal, but the guiltless persecuted penitent; her care was now to soothe his griefs, not to scold him for excesses; and indignation at the false and bloody charge made him appear a martyr in her eyes. As to his accuser, Jennings, Mary had indeed her own vague fancies and suspicions, but there being no evidence, nor even likelihood to support them, she did not dare to breathe the word; she might herself accuse him falsely. Ben, who alone could have thrown a light upon the matter, had always been comparatively a stranger at Hurstley; he was no native of the place, and had no ties there beyond wire and whip-cord: he would appear in that locality now and then in his eccentric orbit, like a comet, and, soon departing thence, would take away Tom as his tail; but even when there, he was mainly a night-prowler, seldom seen by day, and so little versed in village lore, so rarely mingling with its natives, that neither Jennings nor Burke knew one another by sight. His fame indeed was known, but not his person. At pre-

sent, he and Tom were still fowling in some distant fens, nobody could tell where, so that Roger's only witness, who might have accounted for the crock and its finding, was as good as dead to him; to make Ben's absence more unusually prolonged, and his reappearance quite incalculable, he had talked of going with his cargo of wild ducks "either to London or to Liverpool, he didn't rightly know which."

Nevertheless, Mary comforted her husband, and more especially herself, by the hope of his return as a saving witness; though it was always doubtful how far Burke's numerous peccadilloes against property would either find him at large, or authorize the poacher in walking straight before the judges. Still Ben's possible interposition was one source of hope and cheerful expectation. Then the good wife would leave her babes at home, safely in a neighbor's charge, and stay and sit many long hours with poor Roger, taking turns with Grace in talking to him tenderly, making little of home-troubles past, encouraging him to wear a stout heart, and filling him with gratitude for all her kindly care. Thus did she bless, and thus was made a blessing, through the loss and absence of that Crock of Gold.

For Roger himself, he had repented; bitterly and deeply, as became his headlong fall: no sweet luxuries of grief, no soothing sorrow, no chastened meditative melancholy,—such mild penitence as this, he thought, could be but a soberer sort of joy for virgins, saints, and martyrs: no: he, bad man, was unworthy of those melting pleasures, and in sturdy self-revenge he flung them from him, choosing rather to feel overwhelmed with shame, contrition, and reproaches. A humbled man with a broken heart within him,—such was our laborer, penitent in prison; and when he contrasted his peaceful, pure, and Christian course those forty years of poverty, with his blasphemous and infidel career for the one bad week of wealth, he had no patience with himself,—only felt his fall the greater; and his judgment of his own guilt, with a natural exaggeration, went the length of saying,—I am scarcely less guilty before God and man, than if, indeed, my hands were red with murder, and my casual finding had been robbery. He would make no strong appeals to the bar of justice, as an innocent condemned; not he, not he,—innocent,

indeed? his wicked, wicked courses,—(an old man, too, grey-headed, with no young blood in him to excuse, no inexperience to extenuate), these deserved,—did he say hanging? it was a harsher syllable,—hell: and the contrite sinner gladly would have welcomed all the terrors of the gibbet, in hope to take full vengeance on himself for his wicked thirst of gold and all its bitter consequences.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Good Counsel.

But Grace advised him better. "Be humbled as you may before God, my father, but stand up boldly before man: for in his sight and by his law you are little short of blameless. I would not, dearest father, speak to you of sins, except for consolation under them; for it ill becomes a child to see the failings of a parent. But when I know at once how innocent you are in one sense, and how not quite guiltless in another, I wish my words may comfort you, if you will hear them, father. Covetousness,—not robbery,—excess,—not murder,—these were your only sins; and concealment was not wise, neither was a false report befitting. Money, the idol of millions, was your temptation; its earnest love, your fault; its possession, your misfortune. Forgive me, father, if I speak too freely. Good Mr. Evans, who has been so kind to us for years (never kinder than since you were in prison), can speak better than I may, of sins forgiven, and a Friend to raise the fallen: it is not for poor Grace to school her dear and honored father. If you feel yourself guilty of much evil in the sight of Him, before whom the angels bow in meekness,—I need not tell you that your sorrow is most wise, and well-becoming. But this must not harm your cause with men: though tired of life, though hopeless in one's self, though bad, and weak, and like to fall again, we are still God's servants upon earth, bound to guard the life he gives us. Neither must you lightly allow the guilt of unrighteous condemnation to fall upon the judge who tries you; nor let your innocent blood cry to God for vengeance on your native land. Manfully confront the false accuser, tell openly the truth, plead your own cause firmly, warmly, wisely:—so, God defend the right!"

And as Grace Acton said these words, in all the fervor of a daughter's love, with a flushed cheek, parted lips, and her right hand raised to Him whom she invoked, she looked like an inspired prophetess, or the fair maid of Orleans leading on to battle.

In an instant afterwards, she humbly added,

"Forgive me anything I may have said, that seems to chide my father."

"Bless you, bless you, dearest one!" was Roger's sobbing prayer, who had listened to her wisdom breathlessly. "Ah, daughter," then exclaimed the humbled happy man; "I'll try to do all you ask me, Grace; but it is a hard thing to feel myself so wicked, and to have to speak up boldly like a Christian man."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Experience.

THEN with disjointed sentences, suited to the turmoil of his thoughts, half in a soliloquy, half as talking to his daughter, Roger Acton gave his hostile testimony to the worth of wealth.

"Oh, fool, fool that I have been, to set so high a price on gold. To have hungered and thirsted for it,—to have coveted earnestly so bad a gift,—to have longed for Mammon's friendship, which is enmity with God! What has not money cost me? Happiness:—ay, wasn't it to have given me happiness? and the little that I had (it was much, Grace, not little, very much,—too much,—God be praised for it!) all, all the happiness I had, gold took away. Look at our dear old home,—shattered and scattered, as now I wish that crock had been. Health, too; were it not for gold, and all gold gave, I had been sturdy still, and capable; but my nights maddened with anxieties, my days worried with care, my head feverish with drink, my heart rent by conscience,—ah, my girl, my girl, when I thought much of poverty and its hardships, of toil, and hunger, and rheumatics, I little imagined that wealth had heavier cares and pains: I envied them their wanton life of pleasure at the Hall, and little knew how hard it was: well are they called hard-livers who drink, and game, and have nothing to do, except to do wickedness continually. Religion,—can it bide with money, child? I never knew my wicked heart, till fortune made me rich; not until then did I guess how base, lying, false, and bad was "honest Roger;" how sensual, coarse, and brutal, was that hypocrite "steady Acton." Money is a devil, child, or pretty near akin. Then I complained of toil, too, didn't I?—Ah, what are all the aches I ever felt,—laboring with spade and spud in cold and rain, hungry belike, and faint withal,

—what are they all at their worst (and the worst was very seldom after all), to the gnawing cares, the hideous fears, the sins, —the sins, my girl, that tore your poor old father? Wasn't it to be an end of troubles, too, this precious crock of gold? Wo's me, I never knew real trouble till I had it! Look at me, and judge; what has made me live like a beast, sin like a heathen, and lie down here like a felon? What has made me curse Ben Burke, kind, hearty, friendly Ben? and given my poor good boy an ill-report as having stolen and slain? all this crock of gold. But O, my Grace, to think that the crock's curses touched thee, too! didn't it madden me to hear them? Dear, pure, patient child, my darling injured daughter, here upon my knees I pray, forgive that wrong!" and he fell at her feet beseechingly.

"My father," said the noble girl, lifting up his head and passionately kissing it; "when they whispered so against me, and Jonathan heard the wicked things men said, I would have borne it all, all in silence, and let them all believe me bad, father, if I could have guessed that by uttering the truth, I should have seen thee here, in a dungeon, treated as a—a murderer! How was I to tell that men could be so base, as to charge such crimes upon the innocent, when his only fault, or his misfortune, was to find a crock of gold? Oh! forgive me, too, this wrong, my father!"

And they wept in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Jonathan's Troth.

GRACE had been all but an inmate of the prison, ever since her father had been placed there on suspicion. Early and late, and often in the day, was the duteous daughter at his cell, for the governor and the turnkeys favored her; who could resist such beauty and affection, entreating to stay with a father about to stand on trial for his life, and making every effort to be allowed only to pray with him? Thus did Grace spend all the week before those dread assizes.

As to her daily maintenance, ever since that bitter morning when the crock was found, her spiritual fears had obliged her to abstain from touching so much as one penny of that unblest store; and, seeing that honest pride would not let her be supported by grudged and common charity, she had thankfully suffered the wages of her now betrothed Jonathan to serve as means whereon she lived, and (what cost more than all her humble wants) whereby she could administer many little comforts to her father in his prison. When she was not in the cell, Grace was generally at the Hall, to the scandal of more than one Hurstleyan gossip; but perhaps they did not know how usually kind Sarah Stack was of the company, to welcome her with Jonathan, and play propriety. Sarah was a true friend, one for adversity, and, though young herself and not ill-looking, did not envy Grace her handsome lover; on the contrary, she did all to make them happy, and had gone the friendly length of insisting to find Grace and her family in tea and sugar, while all this lasted. I like that much in Sarah Stack.

However, the remainder of the virtuous world were not so considerate, nor so charitable. Many neighbors shunned the poor girl, as if contaminated by the crimes which Roger had undoubt-

edly committed: the more elderly unmarried sisterhood, as we have chronicled already, were overjoyed at the precious opportunity:—"Here was the pert vixen, whom all the young fellows so shamelessly followed, turned out, after all, a murderer's daughter;—they wished her joy of her eyes, and lips, and curls, and pretty speeches; no good ever came of such naughty ways, that the men liked so."

Nay, even the tipsy crew at Bacchus's affected to treat her name with scorn:—"The girl had made much noise about being called a trull, as if many a better than she wasn't one; and, after all,—what was the prudish wench? a sort of she-butcher; they had no patience with her proud looks."

As to farmer Floyd, he made a great stir about his boy being about to marry a felon's daughter; and the affectionate mother, with many elaborate protestations, had "vowed to master Jonathan tnat she would rather lay him out with her own hands, and a penny on each eye, than see a Floyd disgrace himself in that 'ere manner."

And uncles, aunts, and cousins, most disinterestedly exhorted that the obstinate youth be disinherited,—"Ay, Mr. Floyd, I wish your son was a high-minded man like his father; but there's a difference, Mr. Floyd; I wish he had your true blue yeoman's honor, and the spirit that becomes his father's son: if the lad was mine, I'd cut him off with a shilling, to buy a halter for his drab of a wife. Dang it, Mrs. Floyd, it 'll never do to see so queer a Mrs. Jonathan Junior, a standing in your tidy shoes beside this kitchen dresser."

These estimable counsels were, I grieve to say, of too flattering a nature to displease, and of too lucrative a quality not to be continually repeated; until, really, Jonathan was threatened with beggary and the paternal malediction, if he would persist in his disreputable attachment.

Nevertheless, Jonathan clung to the right like a hero.

"Granting poor Acton is the wretch you think,—but I do not believe one word of it,—does his crime make his daughter wicked too? No; she is an angel, a pure and blessed creature, far too good for such a one as I. And happy is the man that has gained her love; he should not give her up were she thrice a

felon's daughter. My father and mother," Jonathan went on to say, "never found a fault in her till now. Who was more welcome on the hill, than pretty Grace? who would oftenest come to nurse some sickly lamb, but gentle Grace? who was wont, from her childhood up, to run home with me so constantly, when school was over, and pleased my kinsfolk so entirely with her nice manners and kind ways? Hadn't he fought for her more than once, and though he came home with bruises on his face, his mother praised him for it?" Then, with a natural divergence from the strict subject-matter of objection, vicarious felony, Jonathan went on to argue about other temporal disadvantages. "Hadn't he heard his father say, that, if she had but money, she was fit to be a countess? and was money, then, the only thing, whereof the having, or the not having, could make her good or bad?—money, the only wealth for soul, and mind, and body? Are affections nothing, are truth and honor nothing, religion nothing, good sense nothing, health nothing, beauty nothing,—unless money gild them all? Nonsense!" said Jonathan, indignantly warmed by his amatory eloquence, "come weal, come wo, Grace and I go down to the grave together; for better, if she can be better,—for worse, if she could sin, Grace Acton is my wealth, my treasure, and possession; and let man do his worst, God himself will bless us!"

So, all this knit their loves: she knew, and he felt, that he was going in the road of nobleness and honor; and the fiery ordeal which he had to struggle through raised that hearty earthly lover more nearly to a level with his heavenly-minded mistress. Through misfortune and mistrust, and evil rumors all around, in spite of opposition from false friends, and the scorn of slanderous foes, he stood by her more constantly, perchance more faithfully, than if the course of true-love had been smoother: he was her escort morning and evening to and from the prison; his strong arm was the dread of babbling fools that spoke a word of disrespect against the Actons; and his brave tongue was now making itself heard, in open vindication of the innocent.

CHAPTER XL.

Suspicions.

YES,—Jonathan Floyd was beginning to speak out boldly certain strange suspicions he had entertained of Jennings. It was a courageous, a rash, a dangerous thing to do: he did not know but what it might have jeoparded his life, say nothing of his livelihood: but Floyd did it.

Ever since that inquest, contrived to be so quickly and so quietly got over, he had noticed Simon's hurried starts, his horrid looks, his altered mien in all he did and said, his new nervous ways at nightfall,—John Page to sleep in Mr. Jennings's chamber, and a rush-light perpetually,—his shudder whenever he had occasion to call at the housekeeper's room, and his evident shrinking from the frequent phrase "Mrs. Quarles's murder."

Then again, Jonathan would often lie awake at nights, thinking over divers matters connected with his own evidence before the coroner which he began to see might be of great importance. Jennings said, he had gone out to still the dog by the front door, —didn't he?—"How then, Mr. Jennings, did you contrive to push back the top bolt? The Hall chairs had not come then, and you are a little fellow, and you know that nobody in the house could reach, without a lift, that bolt but me. Besides, before Sir John came down, the hinges of that door creaked, like a litter o' kittens screaming, and the lock went so hard for want of use and oil, that I'll be sworn your gouty chalkstone fingers could never have turned it: now, I lay half awake for two hours, and heard no creak, no key turned; but I tell you what I did hear though, and I wish now I had a said it at that scanty hurried inquest; I heard what I now believe were distant screams,—(but I was so sleepy),—and a kind of muffled scuffling ever so long: but I fancied it might be a horse in the stable

kicking among the straw in a hunter's loose box. I can guess what it was now,—cannot you, Mr. Simon?—I say, butler,—you must have gone out to quiet Don,—who by the way can't abear the sight of you,—through Mrs. Quarles's room: and, for all your threats, I 'm not afeard to tell you what I think. First answer me this, Mr. Simon Jennings:—where were you all that night, when we were looking for you?—Oh! you choose to forget, do you? I can help your memory, Mr. Butler; what do you think of the shower-bath in Mother Quarles's room?"

As Jonathan, one day at dinner in the servants' hall, took occasion to direct these queries to the presiding Simon, the man gave such a horrid start, and exclaimed, "Away, I say!" so strangely, that Jonathan could doubt no longer,—nor in fact any other of the household: Jennings gave them all round a vindictive scowl, left the table, hastened to his own room, and was seen no more that day.

Speculation now seemed at an end, it had ripened into probability;—but what evidence was there to support so grave a charge against this rigid man? Suspicions are not half enough to go upon,—especially since Roger Acton seems to have had the money. Therefore, though the folks at Hurstley, Sir John, his guests, and all the house, could not but think that Mr. Jennings acted very oddly,—still, he had always been a strange creature, an unpopular bailiff; nobody understood him. So, Floyd, to his own no small danger, stood alone in accusing the man openly.

CHAPTER XLI.

Grace's Alternative.

VERY shortly after that remarkable speech in the servants' hall, Jonathan found another reason for believing that Mr. Simon Jennings was equal to any imaginable amount of human wickedness. That reason will shortly now appear: but we must first of all dig at its roots somewhat deeper than Jonathan's mental husbandry could manage.

If any trait of character were wanting to complete the desperate infamy of Jennings—(really I sometimes hope that his grandfather's madness had a kind of reawakening in this accursed man),—it was furnished by a new and shrewd scheme for feeding to the full his lust of gold. The bailiff had more than once, as we have hinted, found means to increase his evil hoard, by having secretly gained power over female innocence and honest reputation: similarly he now devised a deep-laid plot nothing short of diabolical. His plot was this: and I choose to hurry over such foul treason. Let a touch or two hint its outlines: those who will, may paint up the picture for themselves. Simon looked at Sir John,—young, gay, wealthy; he coveted his purse, and fancied that the surest bait to catch that fish was fair Grace Acton: if he could entrap her for his master (to whom he gave full credit for delighting in the plan), he counted surely on magnificent rewards. How then to entrap her? Thus:—he, representing himself as prosecutor of Roger the accused, held for him, he averred, the keys of life and death: he would set this idea (whether true or not little mattered, if it served his purpose) before an affectionate daughter, who should have it in her power to save her parent, if, and only if, she would yield herself to Jennings: and he well knew that, granting she gave herself secretly to him first, on such a bribe

as her father's liberation, he would have no difficulty whatever in selling her second-hand beauty on his own terms to his master. It was a foul scheme and shall not be enlarged upon: but (as will appear) thus slightly to allude to it was needful to our tale, as well as to the development of character in Mammon's pattern-slave, and to the fulness of his due retribution in this world. I may add, that if anything could make the plan more heinous, if any shade than blackest can be blacker, this extra turpitude is seen in the true consideration, that the promise to Grace of her father's safety would be entirely futile,—as Jennings knew full well; the Crown was prosecutor, not he: and circumstantial evidence alone would be sufficient to condemn. Again, it really is nothing but bare justice to remark with reference to Sir John, that the deep-dyed villain reckoned quite without his host: for however truly the baronet had ofttimes been much less a self-denying Scipio than a wanton Alcibiades, still the fine young fellow would have flung Simon piecemeal to his hounds, if ever he had breathed so atrocious a temptation: the maid was pledged, and Vincent knew it.

Now, it so happened that one evening at dusk, when Grace as usual was obliged to leave the prison, there was no Jonathan in waiting to accompany her all the dreary long way home: this was strange, as his good-hearted master, privately informed of his noble attachment, never refused the man permission, but winked for the time at his frequent evening absence. Nevertheless, on this occasion, as would happen now and then, Floyd could not escape from the dining-room; probably because—Mr. Jennings had secretly gone forth to escort the girl himself. Accordingly, instead of loved Jonathan, sidled up to her the loathsome Simon.

Let me not soil these pages by recording, in however guarded phrase, the grossness of this wretch's propositions: it was a long way to Hurstley and the reptile never ceased tormenting her every step of it, till the village was in sight: twice she ran, and he ran too, keeping up with her, and pouring into her ear a father's cruel fate and his own detestable alternative. She never once spoke to him, but kept on praying in her own pure mind for a just acquittal; not for one moment would she entertain the

wicked thought of "doing evil that good might come;" and so, with flushed cheek, tingling ears, the mien of an insulted empress, and the dauntless resolution of a heroine, she hastened on to Hurstley.

Look here! by great good fortune comes Jonathan Floyd to meet her.

"Save me, Jonathan, save me!" and she fainted in his arms.

Now, truth to say, though Sir John knew it, Simon did not, that Grace was Jonathan's beloved and betrothed; and the cause lay simply in this, that Jonathan had frankly told his master of it, when he found the dreadful turn things had taken with poor Roger; but as to Simon, no mortal in the neighborhood ever communicated with him, further than as urged by fell necessity. Of course, the lovers' meetings were as private as all such matters generally are; and Sarah's aid managed them admirably. Therefore it now came to pass that Simon and Jonathan looked on each other in mutual astonishment, and needs must wait until Grace Acton could explain the "save me." Not but that Jennings seemed much as if he wished to run away; but he did not know how to manage it.

"Dear Jonathan," she whispered feebly, "save me from Simon Jennings."

In an instant, Jonathan's grasp was tightly involved in the Bailiff's stiff white neckcloth. And Grace, with much maidenly reserve, told her lover all she dared to utter of that base bartering for her father's life.

"Come straight along with me, you villain, straight to the master!" and the sturdy Jonathan, administering all the remainder of the way (a quarter of a mile of avenue made part of it) innumerable kickings and cuffings, hauled the half-mummied bailiff into the servants' hall.

"Now then, straight before the master! John Page, be so good as to knock at the dining-room door, and ask master very respectfully if his honor will be good enough to suffer me to speak to him."

CHAPTER XLII

The Dismissal.

It was after dinner. Sir John and his friends had somehow been less jovial than usual; they were absolutely dull enough to be talking politics. So, when the boy of many buttons tapped at the door, and meekly brought in Jonathan's message, recounting also how he had got Mr. Jennings in tow for some inexplicable crime, the strangeness of the affair was a very welcome incident: both host and guests hailed it an adventure.

"By all means, let Jonathan come in."

The trio were just outside; and when the blue and silver footman hauling in by his unrelinquished throat that scared bailiff, and followed by the blushing village beauty, stood within the room, Sir John and his half-dozen friends greeted the tableau with united acclamations.

"I say, Pypp, that 's a devilish fine creature," metaphorically remarked the Honorable Lionel Poynter.

"Yaas." Lord George was a long, sallow, slim young man, with a goatish beard, like the Duc d'Aumale's; he affected extreme fashion and infinite sangfroid.

"Well, Jonathan, what is it?" asked the Baronet.

"Why, in one word, my honored master, this scoundrel here has been wickedly insulting my own poor dear Grace, by promising to save her father from the gallows if—if—"

"If what, man? speak out," said Mr. Poynter.

"You don't mean to say, Jennings, that you are brute enough to be seducing that poor man Roger's daughter, just as he 's going to be tried for his life?" asked Sir John.

Simon uttered nothing in reply; but Grace burst into tears.

"A fair idea that, 'pon my honor," drawled the chivalrous Pypp, proceeding to direct his delicate attentions towards the weeping damsel.

"Simon Jennings," said Sir John, after pausing in vain for his reply, "I have long wished to get rid of you, sir; silence!—I know you, and have been finding out your rascally proceedings these ten days past. I have learnt much, more than you may fancy: and now this crowning villainy [what if he had known of the ulterior designs?] gives me fair occasion to say once and for ever, begone!"

Jennings drew himself up with an air of insufferable impudence, and quietly answered,

"John Vincent, I am proud to leave your service. I trust I can afford to live without your help."

There was a general outcry at this speech, and Jonathan collared him again; but the Baronet calmly set all straight by saying,

"Perhaps, sir, you may not be aware that your systematic thievings and extortions have amply justified me in detaining your iron chest and other valuables, until I find out how you may have come by them."

This was the coup de grace to Jennings, who looked scared and terrified:—what!—all gone,—all, his own beloved hoard, and that dear-bought crock of gold? Then Sir John added, after one minute of dignified and indignant silence,

"Begone!—Jonathan, put him out; and if you will kick him out of the Hall door on your private account, I'll forgive you for it."

With that the liveried Antinous raised the little monster by the small of the back, drew him struggling from the presence, and lifting him up like a football, inflicted one enormous kick that sent him spinning down the whole flight of fifteen marble stairs. This exploit accomplished to the satisfaction of all parties, Jonathan naturally enough returned to look for Grace; and his master, with a couple of friends who had run to the door to witness the catastrophe, returned immediately before him.

"Lord George Pypp, you will oblige me by leaving the young woman alone," was Sir John's first angry reproof when he perceived the rustic beauty radiant with indignation at some mean offence.

"The worthy Baronet wa-ants her for himself," drawled Pypp.

"Say that again, my Lord, and you shall follow Jennings."

Whilst the noble youth was slowly elaborating a proper answer, Jonathan's voice was heard once more: he had long looked very white, kept both hands clenched, and seemed as if, saving his master's presence, he could, and would have vanquished the whole room of them.

"Master, have I your honor's permission to speak?"

"No, Jonathan, I 'll speak for you; if, that is to say, Lord George will——"

"Paardon me, Sir John Devereux Vincent, your feyllow,—and his master, are not fit company for Lord George Pypp,"—and he leisurely proceeded to withdraw.

"Stop a minute, Pypp, I've just one remark to make," hurriedly exclaimed Mr. Lionel Poynter, "if Sir John will suffer me; Vincent, my good friend, we are wrong,—Pypp's wrong, and so am I. First then, let me beg pardon of a very pretty girl, for making her look prettier by blushes; next, as the maid really is engaged to you, my fine fellow, it is not beneath a gentleman to say, I hope that you 'll forgive me for too warmly admiring your taste; as for George's imputation, Vincent—"

"I beyg to observe," enunciated the noble scion, "I 'm awf, Poynter."

He gradually drew himself away, and the Baronet never saw him more.

"For shame, Pypp!" shouted after him the warm-hearted Silliphant; "I tell you what it is, Vincent, you must let me give a toast: —'Grace and her lover!' here, my man, your master allows you to take a glass of wine with us; help your beauty too."

The toast was drank with high applause: and before Jonathan humbly led away his pleased and blushing Grace, he took an opportunity of saying,

"If I may be bold enough to speak, kind gentlemen, I wish to thank you: I oughtn't to be long, for I am nothing but your servant; let it be enough to say my heart is full. And I 'm in

hopes it wouldn't be very wrong in me, kind gentlemen, to propose ;—' My noble master,—honor and happiness to him !' "

"Bravo ! Jonathan, bravo-o-o-o !" there was a clatter of glasses ;—and the humble pair of lovers retreated under cover of the toast.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Simon alone.

JENNINGS gathered himself up, from that Jew-of-Malta-tumble down the steps, less damaged by the fall than could have been imagined possible; the fact being, that his cat-like nature had stood him in good stead,—he had lighted on his feet; and nothing but a mighty dorsal bruise bore witness to the prowess of a Jonathan.

But, if his body was comparatively sound, the inner man was bruised all over: he crept back and retreated to his room, in as broken and despondent a frame of mind, as any could have wished to bless him wherewithal. However, he still had one thing left to live for: his hoard,—that precious hoard within his iron box, and then—the crock of gold. He took Sir John's threat about detaining, and so forth, as merely future, and calculated on rendering it nugatory, by decamping forthwith, chattels and all; but he little expected to find that the idea had already been acted upon!

On that identical afternoon, when Simon had gone forth to insult Grace Acton with his villainous proposals, Sir John, on returning from a ride, had commanded his own seal to be placed on all Mr. Jennings's effects, and the boxes to be forthwith removed to a place of safety: induced thereto by innumerable proofs from every quarter that the bailiff had been cheating him on a most liberal scale, and plundering his tenants systematically. Therefore, when Jennings hastened to his chamber to console himself for all things by looking at his gold, and counting out a bag or two—it was gone, gone, irrecoverably gone! safely stowed away for rigid scrutiny in the grated muniment-room of Hurstley. Oh, what a howl the caitiff gave, when he

saw that his treasure had been taken! he was a wild bull in a net; a crocodile caught upon the hooks; a hyæna at bay. What could he do? which way should he turn? how help himself, or get his gold again? Unluckily—Oh, confusion, confusion!—his account-books were along with all his hoard, those tell-tale ledgers, wherein he had duly noted down, for his own private and triumphant glance, the curious difference between his lawful and unlawful gains; there, was every overcharge recorded, every matter of extortion systematically ranged, that he might take all the tenants in their turn; there, were filed the receipts of many honest men, whom the guardians and Sir John had long believed to be greatly in arrear; there, was recorded at length the catalogue of dues from tradesmen; there, the list of bribes for the custom of the hall. It would amply authorize Sir John in appropriating the whole store; and Jennings thought of this with terror. Everything now was obviously lost, lost! Oh, sickening little word, all lost! all he had ever lived for,—all which had made him live the life he did,—all which made him fear to die. "Fear to die,—ha! who said that? I will not fear to die: yes, there is one escape left, I will hazard the blind leap; this misery shall have an end,—this sleepless, haunted, cheated, hated wretch shall live no longer, ha! ha! ha! ha! I'll do it! I'll do it!"

Then did that wretched man strive in vain to kill himself, for his hour was not yet come. His first idea was laudanum,—that only mean of anything like rest to him for many weeks; and pouring out all he had, a little phial, nearly half a wine-glass full, he quickly drank it off: no use—no use; the agitation of his mind was too intense, and the habit of a continually increasing dose had made him proof against the poison; it would not even lull him, but seemed to stretch and rack his nerves, exciting him to deeds of bloody daring. Should he rush out, like a Malay running a muck, with a carving-knife in each hand, and kill right and left:—vengeance! vengeance! on Jonathan Floyd, and John Vincent? No, no; for some of them at last would overcome him, and think him mad; and, O terror!—his doom for life, without the means of death, would be solitary confinement. "Stay! with this knife in my hand—means of death,—

yes, it shall be so." And he hurriedly drew the knife across his throat; no use, nothing done; his cowardly skin shrank away from cutting—he dared not cut again; a little bloody scratch was all.

But the heart, the heart,—that should be easier! And the miscreant, not quite a Cato, gave a feeble stab, that made a little puncture; not yet, Simon Jennings, no, not yet; you shall not cheat the gallows. "Ha! hanging, hanging! why had I not thought of that before?"

He mounted on a chair with a gimlet in his hand, and screwed it tightly into the wainscotting as high as he could reach; then he took a cord from the sacking of his bed, secured it to the gimlet, made a noose, put his head in, kicked the chair away,—and swung by his wounded neck; in vain, all in vain; as he struggled in the agonies of self-protecting nature, the handle of the gimlet came away, and he fell heavily to the ground.

"Bless us," said Sarah to one of the house-maids, as they were arranging their curl-papers to go to bed: "what can that noise be in Mr. Jennings' room? his tall chest of drawers has fallen, I shouldn't wonder: it was always unsafe to my mind. Listen, Jenny, will you?"

Jenny crept out, and as laudable females sometimes do, listened at Simon's keyhole.

"Lack-a-daisy, Sall, such a groaning and moaning; p'raps he's a dying: put on your cap again, and tell Jonathan to go and see."

Sarah did as she was bid, and Jonathan did as he was bid;—and there was Mr. Jennings on the floor, blue in the face, with a halter round his neck.

The house was soon informed of the interesting event, and the bailiff was nursed as tenderly as if he had been a sucking babe; fomentations, applications, hot potations: but he soon came to again, without any hope or wish to repeat the dread attempt: he was kept in bed, closely watched, and Stephen Cramp, together with his rival, Eager, remained continually in alternative attendance: until a day or two recovered him as strong as ever. I told you, Simon Jennings, that your time was not yet come.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Trial.

THE trial now came on, and Roger Acton stood arraigned of robbery and murder. I must hasten over lengthy legal technicalities, which would only serve to swell this volume, without adding one iota to its interest or usefulness. Nothing could be easier, nothing more worth while, as a matter of mere book-making, than to tear a few pages out of some musty record of Criminal Court Practice or other Newgate Calendar-piece of authorship, and wade wearily through the length and breadth of indictments, speeches, examinations, and all the other learned clatter of six hours in the judgment-halls of law. If the reader wishes for all this, let him pore over those unhealthy-looking books, whose exterior is dove-colored as the kirtle of innocence, but their inwards black as the conscience of guilt; whitened sepulchres, all spotless without; but within them are enshrined the quibbling knavery, the distorted ingenuity, the mystifying learnedness, the warped and warping views of truth, the lying, slandering, bad-excusing, good-condemning principles and practices of those who cater for their custom at the guiltiest felon's cell, and would glory in defending Lucifer himself.

In the case of sheer innocence, indeed, as Roger's was,—or in one of much doubt and secresy, where the client denies all guilt, and the counsel sees reason to believe him,—let the advocate manfully battle out his cause: but where crime has poured out his confessions in a counsellor's ear,—is not this man bought by gold to be a partaker and abettor in his sins, when he strives with all his might to clear the guilty, and not seldom throws the hideous charge on innocence? If the advocate has no wish to entrap his own conscience, nor to damage the tissue of his honor, let him reject the client criminal who confesses, and only plead

for those from whom he has had no assurance of their guilt; or, better far, whose innocence he heartily believes in.

Such an advocate was Mr. Grantly, a barrister of talents and experience, who, from motives of the purest benevolence, did all that in him lay for Roger Acton. In one thing, however, and that of no small import, the kindly cautious man of law had contrived to do more harm than good: for, after having secretly made every effort, but in vain, to find Ben Burke as a witness,—and after having heard that the aforesaid Ben was a notorious poacher, and only intimate at Hurstley with Acton and his family,—he strongly recommended Roger to say nothing about the man or his adventure, as the acknowledgment of such an intimacy would only damage his cause: all that need appear was, that he found the crock in his garden, never mind how he "thought" it got there: poachers are not much in the habit of flinging away pots of gold, and no jury would believe but that the ill-reputed personage in question was an accomplice in the murder, and had shared the spoil with his friend Roger Acton. All this was very shrewd, and well meant; but was not so wise, for all that, as simple truth would have been: nevertheless, Roger acquiesced in it, for a better reason than Mr. Grantly's,—namely this; his feelings toward poor Ben had undergone an amiable revulsion, and, well aware how the whole neighborhood were prejudiced against him for his freebooting propensities, he feared to get his good rough friend into trouble if he mentioned his nocturnal fishing at Pike island; especially when he considered that little red Savings' Bank, which, though innocent as to the getting, was questionable as to the rights of spending, and that, really, if he involved the professed poacher in this mysterious affair, he might put his liberty or life into very serious jeopardy. On this account, then, which Grace could not entirely find fault with (though she liked nothing that savored of concealment), Roger Acton agreed to abide by Mr. Grantly's advice; and thus he never alluded to his connection with the poacher.

Enlightened as we are, and intimate with all the hidden secrets of the story, we may be astonished to hear that, notwithstanding all Mr. Grantly's ingenuity, and all the siftings of

cross-questioners, the case was clear as light against poor Acton. No alibi,—he lived upon the spot. No witnesses to character; for Roger's late excesses had wiped away all former good report: kind Mr. Evans himself, with tears in his eyes, acknowledged sadly that Acton had once been a regular church-goer, a frequent communicant; but had fallen off of late, poor fellow! And then, in spite of protestations to the contrary, behold! the corpus delicti—that unlucky crock of gold, actually in the man's possession, and the fragment of shawl,—was not that sufficient?

Jonathan Floyd in open court had been base enough to accuse Mr. Jennings of the murder. Mr. Jennings indeed! a strict man of high character, lately dismissed, after twenty years' service, in the most arbitrary manner by young Sir John, who had taken a great liking to the Actons. People could guess why, when they looked on Grace: and Grace, too, was sufficient reason to account for Jonathan's wicked suspicions; of course, it was the lover's interest to throw the charge on other people. As to Mr. Jennings himself, just recovered from a fit of illness, it was astonishing how liberally and indulgently he prayed the court to show the prisoner mercy: his white and placid face looked quite benevolently at him,—and this respectable person was a murderer, eh, Mr. Jonathan?

So, when the Judge summed up, and clearly could neither find nor make a loophole for the prisoner, the matter seemed accomplished; all knew what the verdict must be,—poor Roger Acton had not the shadow of a chance.

CHAPTER XLV.

Roger's Defence.

THEN, while the Jury were consulting,—they would not leave the box, it seemed so clear,—Roger broke the death-like silence; and he said:—

"Judge, I crave your worship's leave to speak: and hearken to me, countrymen. Many evil things have I done in my time, both against God and my neighbor: I am ashamed, as well I may be, when I think on 'em: I have sworn, and drunk, and lied; I have murmured loudly,—coveted wickedly,—ay, and once I stole. It was a little theft, I lost it on the spot, and never stole again: pray God, I never may. Nevertheless, countrymen, and sinful though I be in the sight of Him who made us; according to man's judgment and man's innocency, I had lived among you all blameless, until I found that crock of gold. I did find it, countrymen, as God is my witness, and, therefore, though a sinner, I appeal to Him: He knoweth that I found it in the sedge that skirts my garden, at the end of my own celery trench. I did wickedly and foolishly to hide my find, worse to deny it, and worst of all to spend it in the low lewd way I did. But of robbery I am guiltless as you are. And as to this black charge of murder, till Simon Jennings spoke the word, I never knew it had been done. Folk of Hurstley, friends and neighbors, you all know Roger Acton,—the old-time honest Roger of these forty years, before the devil made him mad by giving him much gold,—did he ever maliciously do harm to man or woman, to child or poor dumb brute?—No, countrymen, I am no murderer. That the seemings are against me, I wot well; they may excuse your judgment in condemning me to death,—and I and the good gentleman there who took my part (Heaven bless you, sir!) cannot go against the facts: but they speak falsely, and I

truly; Roger Acton is an innocent man: may God defend the right!"

"Amen!" earnestly whispered a tremulous female voice, "and God will save you, father."

The Court was still as death, except for sobbing; the Jury were doubting and confounded; in vain Mr. Jennings looking at the foreman, shook his head and stroked his chin in an incredulous and knowing manner; clearly they must retire, not at all agreed; and the judge himself, that masqued man in flowing wig and ermine, but still warmed by human sympathies, struck a tear from his wrinkled cheek; and all seemed to be involuntarily waiting (for the Jury, though unable to decide, had not yet left their box), to see whether any sudden miracle would happen to save a man, whom evidence made so guilty, and yet he bore upon his open brow the genuine signature of Innocence.

"Silence, there, silence! you can't get in; there's no room for'ards!" but a couple of javelin-men at the door were knocked down right and left, and through the dense and suffocating crowd, a black-whiskered fellow elbowing his way against their faces, spite of all obstruction, struggled to the front behind the bar. Then, breathless with gigantic exertion (it was like a mammoth treading down the cedars), he roared out,

"Judge, swear me, I'm a witness; huzza! it's not too late."

And the irreverent gentleman tossed a fur cap right up to the skylight.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The Witness.

Mr. Grantly brightened up at once, Grace looked happily to heaven, and Roger Acton shouted out,

"Thank God! thank God!—there's Ben Burke!"

Yes, he had heard miles away of his friend's danger about an old shawl and a honey-pot full of gold, and he had made all speed, with Tom in his train, to come and bear witness to the innocence of Roger. The sensation in court, as may be well conceived, was thrilling; but a vociferous crier, and the deep anxiety to hear this sturdy witness, soon reduced all again to silence.

Then did they swear Benjamin Burke, who, to the scandal of his cause, would insist upon stating his profession to be "poacher;" and at first, poor simple fellow, seemed to have a notion that a sworn witness meant one who swore continually; but he was soon convinced otherwise, and his whole demeanor gradually became as polite and deferent as his coarse nature would allow. And Ben told his adventure on Pike Island, as we have heard him tell it, pretty much in the same words, for the Judge and Mr. Grantly let him take his own courses; and then he added (with a characteristic expletive, which we may as well omit, seeing it occasioned a cry of "order" in the court), "There, if that there white-livered little villain warn't the chap that brought the crocks, my name an't Ben Burke."

"Good Heavens! Mr. Jennings, what's the matter?" said a briefless one, starting up: this was Mr. Sharp, a personage on former occasions distinguished highly as a thieves' advocate, but now, unfortunately, out of work. "Loosen his cravat, some one there; the gentleman is in fits."

"Oh, aunt, aunt Quarles, dont throttle me; I'll tell all, all;

let go, let go!" and the wretched man slowly recovered, as Ben Burke said,

"Ay, my lord, ask him yourself, the little wretch can tell you all about it."

"I submit, my lurd," interposed the briefless one, "that this respectable gentleman is taken ill, and that his presence may now be dispensed with, as a witness in the cause."

"No, sir, no," deliberately answered Jennings; "I must stay: the time I find is come: I have not slept for weeks; I am exhausted utterly; I have lost my gold; I am haunted by her ghost: I can go nowhere but that face follows me,—I can do nothing but her fingers clutch my throat. It is time to end this misery. In hope to lay her spirit, I would have offered up a victim: but—but she will not have him. Mine was the hand that—"

"Pardon me," upstarted Mr. Sharp, "this poor gentleman is a monomaniac; pray, my lurd, let him be removed while the trial is proceeding."

"You horse-hair hypocrite, you!" roared Ben, "would you hang the innocent, and save the guilty?"

Would he? would Mr. Philip Sharp? Ay, that he would; and glad of such a famous opportunity. What! would not Newgate rejoice, and Horsemonger be glad? Would not his bag be filled with briefs from the community of burglars, and his purse be rich in gold subscribed by the brotherhood of thieves? Great at once would be his name among the purlieus of iniquity: and every rogue in London would retain but Philip Sharp. Would he? ask him again.

But Jennings quietly proceeded like a speaking statue.

"I am not mad, most noble—" [the bible-read villain was from habit quoting Paul]—"my lord, I mean. My hand did the deed: I throttled her" (here he gave a scared look over his shoulder): "yes,—I did it once and again: I took the crock of gold. You may hang me now, Aunt Quarles."

"My lurd, my lurd, this is a most irregular proceeding," urged Mr. Sharp; "on the part of the prisoner,—I, I crave pardon,—on behalf of this most respectable and deluded gentleman, Mr. Simon Jennings, I contend that no one may criminate

himself in this way, without the shadow of evidence to support such suicidal testimony. Really, my lurd—"

"Oh, sir, but my father may go free?" earnestly asked Grace: but Ben Burke's voice,—I had almost written woice,—overwhelmed them all:

"Let me speak, Judge, an't please your honor, and take you notice, Master Horsehair. You want ewidence, do you, beyond the man's confession: here, I'll give it you. Look at this here wice:" and he stretched forth his well-known huge and horny hand:

"When I caught that dridful little reptil by the arm, he wriggled like a sniggled eel, so I was forced, you see, to grasp him something tighter, and could feel his little arm-bones crack like any chicken's: now then, if his left elbow a'n't black and blue, though it's a month agone and more, I'll eat it. Strip him and see."

No need to struggle with the man, or tear his coat off. Jennings appeared only too glad to find that there was other evidence than his own foul tongue, and that he might be hung at last without sacking-rope or gimlet; so, he quietly bared his arm, and the elbow looked all manner of colors,—a mass of old bruises.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Mr. Sharp's Advocacy.

THE whole Court trembled with excitement: it was deep still silence; and the judge said,

"Prisoner at the bar, there is now no evidence against you: gentlemen of the jury, of course you will acquit him."

The foreman: "All agreed, my lord, not guilty."

"Roger Acton," said the judge, "to God alone you owe this marvellous, almost miraculous, interposition: you have had many wrongs innocently to endure, and I trust that the right feelings of society will requite you for them in this world, as, if you serve Him, God will in the next. You are honorably acquitted, and may leave this bar."

In vain the crier shouted, in vain the javelin-men helped the crier, the court was in a tumult of joy; Grace sprang to her father's neck, and Sir John Vincent, who had been in attendance sitting near the Judge all the trial through, came down to him, and shook his hand warmly.

Roger's eyes ran over, and he could only utter,

"Thank God! thank God! He does better for me than I deserved." But the Court was hushed at last: the jury resworn; certain legal forms and technicalities speedily attended to, as counts of indictment, and so forth: and the Judge then quietly said,

"Simon Jennings, stand at that bar."

He stood there like an image.

"My lurd, I claim to be prisoner's counsel."

"Mr. Sharp,—the prisoner shall have proper assistance by all means; but I do not see how it will help your case, if you cannot get your client to plead not guilty."

While Mr. Philip Sharp converses earnestly with the criminal

in confidential whispers, I will entertain the sagacious reader with a few admirable lines I have just cut out of a newspaper: they are headed

"SUPPRESSION OF TRUTH, AND EXCLUSION OF EVIDENCE.

"Lawyers abhor any short cut to the truth. The pursuit is the thing for their pleasure and profit, and all their rules are framed for making the most of it.

"Crime is to them precisely what the fox is to the sportsman: and the object is not to pounce on it and capture it at once, but to have a good run for it and to exhibit skill and address in the chace. Whether the culprit or the fox escape or not, is a matter of indifference, the run being the main thing.

"The punishment of crime is as foreign to the object of lawyers, as the extirpation of the fox is to that of sportsmen. The sportsman, because he hunts the fox, sees in the summary destruction of the fox by the hand of a clown, an offence foul, strange, and unnatural, little short of murder. The lawyer treats crime in the same way: his business is the chace of it; but, that it may exist for the chace, he lays down rules protecting it against surprises and capture by any methods but those of the forensic field.

"One good turn deserves another, and as the lawyer owes his business to crime, he naturally makes it his business to favor and spare it as much as possible. To seize and destroy it wherever it can be got at, seems to him as barbarous as shooting a bird sitting, or a hare in her form, does to the sportsman. The phrase, to give *law*, for the allowance of a start, or any chance of escape, expresses the methods of lawyers in the pursuit of crime, and has doubtless been derived from their practice.

"Confession is the thing most hateful to law, for this stops its sport at the outset. It is the surrender of the fox to the hounds. 'We don't want your stinking body,' says the lawyer; 'we want the run after the scent. Away with you, be off; retract your admission, take the benefit of telling a lie, give us employment, and let us take our chance of hunting out, in our rounda-

bout ways, the truth, which we will not take when it lies before us.'"

As I perceive that Mr. Sharp has not yet made much impression upon the desponding prisoner, suffer me to recommend to your notice another sensible leader: the abuse which it would combat calls loudly for amendment. There is plenty of time to spare, for some preliminaries of trial have yet to be arranged, and the judge has just stepped out to get a sandwich, and everybody stands at ease; moreover, gentle reader, the paragraphs following are well worthy of your attention. Let us name them,

"MORBID SYMPATHIES.

"We have often thought that the tenderness shown by our law to presumed criminals is as injurious as it is inconsistent and excessive. A miserable beggar, a petty rioter, the wretch who steals a loaf to satisfy the gnawings of his hunger, is roughly seized, closely examined, and severely punished; meanwhile, the plain common sense of our mobs, if not of our magistracy, has pitied the offender, and perhaps acquitted him. But let some apparent murderer be caught, almost in the flagrant deed of his atrocity; let him, to the best of all human belief, have killed, disembowelled, and dismembered; let him have united the coolness of consummate craft to the boldest daring of iniquity, and straightway (though the generous crowd may hoot and hunt the wretch with yelling execration) he finds in law and lawyers refuge, defenders, and apologists. Tenderly and considerately is he cautioned on no account to criminate himself: he is exhorted, even by judges, to withdraw the honest and truthful plea of 'guilty,' now the only amends which such an one can make to the outraged laws of God and man: he is defended, even to the desperate length of malignant accusation of the innocent, by learned men, whose aim it is to pervert justice and screen the guilty! he is lodged and tended with more circumstances of outward comfort and consideration than he probably has ever experienced in all his life before; and if, notwithstanding the ingenuity of his advocates, and the merciful glosses of his judge, a simple-minded British jury capitally convict him, and he is

handed over to the executioner, he still finds pious gentlemen ready to weep over him in his cell, and titled dames to send him white camellias, to wear upon his heart when he is hanging.*

"Now what is the necessary consequence of this, but a mighty, a fearfully influential premium on crime? And what is its radical cause, but the absurd indulgence wherewith our law greets the favored, *because* the atrocious criminal? Upon what principle of propriety, or of natural justice, should a seeming murderer not be—we will not say sternly, but even kindly—catechised, and for his very soul's sake counselled to confess his guilt? Why should the *morale* of evidence be so thoroughly lost sight of, and a malefactor, who is ready to acknowledge crime, or unable, when questioned, to conceal it, on no account be listened to, lest he may do his precious life irreparable harm? It is not agonized repentance or incidental disclosure that makes the culprit his own executioner, but his crime that has preceded; it is not the weak, avowing tongue, but the bold and bloody hand.

"We are unwilling to allude specifically to the name of any recent malefactor in connection with these plain remarks; for, in the absence alike of hindered voluntary confession and of incomplete legal evidence, we would not prejudge, that is, prejudice a case. But we do desire to exclaim against any further exhibition of that morbid tenderness wherewith all persons are sure to be treated, if only they are accused of enormities more than usually disgusting; and we specially protest against that foolish, however ancient, rule in our criminal law, which discourages and rejects the slenderest approach to a confession, while it has sacrificed many an innocent victim to the uncertainty of evidence, supported by nothing more safe than outward circumstantials."

At length, and after much gesticulation and protestation, Mr. Sharp has succeeded; he had apparently inoculated the misera-

* It has been stated as a fact, that a certain Lady L— S—, in her last interview with a young man, condemned to death for the brutal murder of his sweetheart, presented him with a white camellia, as a token of eternal peace, which the gallant gentleman actually wore at the gallows in his buttonhole

ble man with hopes; for the miscreant now said firmly, "I plead not guilty."

The briefless one looked happy, nay triumphant: Jennings was a wealthy man, all knew, and, anyhow, he should bag a bouncing fee. How far such money was likely to do him any good, he never stopped to ask. "Money is money," said Philip Sharp and the Emperor Vespasian.

We need not trouble ourselves to print Mr. Sharp's very flashy, flippant speech. Suffice it to say, that, not content with asserting vehemently on his conscience as a Christian, on his honor as a man, that Simon Jennings was an innocent, maligned, persecuted individual, laboring, perhaps, under monomania, but pure and gentle as the babe new-born,—not satisfied with traducing honest Ben Burke as a most suspicious witness, probably a murderer—ay, *the* murderer himself, a mere riotous ruffian [Ben here chucked his cap at him, and thereby countenanced the charge], a mere scoundrel, not to say scamp, whom no one should believe upon his oath; he again, with all the semblance of sincerity, accused, however vainly, Roger Acton: and lastly, to the disgust and astonishment of the whole court, added, with all acted appearances of fervent zeal for justice, "And I charge his pious daughter, too, that far too pretty piece of goods, Grace Acton, with being accessory to this atrocious crime after the fact!"

There was a storm of shames and hisses; but the judge allayed it, quietly saying,

"Mr. Sharp, be so good as to confine your attention to your client; he appears to be quite worthy of you."

Then Mr. Sharp, like the firm just man immortalized by Flaccus, stood stout against the visage of the judge, sneered at the wrath of citizens commanding things unjust, turned to Ben Burke minaciously, calling him "Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ" [as Burke had heard this quotation, he thought it was about the "ducks" he had been decoying], and altogether seemed not about to be put down, though the huge globe crack about his ears. After this he calmly worded on, seeming to regard the judge's stinging observation with the same sort of indifference as the lion would a dewdrop on his mane; and having poured

out all manner of voluminous bombast, he gradually ran down and came to a conclusion; then, jumping up refreshed like the bounding of a tennis ball, he proceeded to call witnesses; and, judging from what happened at the inquest, as well as because he wished to overwhelm a suspected and suspecting witness, he pounced, somewhat infelicitously, on Jonathan Floyd.

"So, my fine young fellow, you are a footman, eh, at Hurstley?"

"Yes, sir, an' it please you—or rather, an' it please my master."

"You remember what happened on the night of the late Mrs. Quarles's decease?"

"Oh, many things happened; Mr. Jennings was lost, he wasn't to be found, he was hid somewhere, nobody saw him till next morning."

"Stop, sirrah! not quite so quick, if you please; you are on your oath, be careful what you say. I have it in evidence, sirrah, before the coroner;" and he looked triumphantly about him at this clencher to all Jonathan's testimony; "that you saw him yourself that night speaking to the dog; what do you mean by swearing that nobody saw him till next morning?"

"Well, mister, I mean this; whether or no poor old Mrs. Quarles saw her affectionate nephew that night before the clock struck twelve, there's none alive to tell; but no one else did,—for Sarah and I sat up for him till past midnight. He was hidden away somewhere, snug enough; and as I verily believe, in the poor old 'ooman's own—"

"Silence, silence! sir, I say; we want none of your impertinent guesses here, if you please; to the point, sirrah, to the point; you swore before the coroner, that you had seen Mr. Jennings in his courage and his kindness quieting the dog that very night, and now—"

"Oh," interrupted Jonathan in his turn, "for the matter of that, when I saw him with the dog, it was hard upon five in the morning. And here, gentlemen," added Floyd, with a promiscuous and comprehensive bow all round, "if I may speak my mind about the business—"

"Go down, sir!" said Mr. Sharp, who began to be afraid of truths.

"Pardon me, this may be of importance," remarked Roger Acton's friend; "say what you have to say, young man."

"Well, then, gentlemen and my lord, I mean to say thus much. Jennings there, the prisoner (and I'm glad to see him standing at the bar), swore at the inquest that he went to quiet Don, going round through the front door; now, none could get through that door without my hearing of him; and certainly a little puny Simon like him could never do so without I came to help him; for the lock was stiff with rust, and the bolt out of his reach."

"Stop, young man, my respected client, Mr. Jennings, got upon a chair."

"Indeed, sir? then he must ha' created the chair for that special purpose: there wasn't one in the hall then; no, nor for two days after, when they came down bran-new from Dowbiggins in London, with the rest o' the added furnitur' just before my honored master."

This was conclusive, certainly; and Floyd proceeded.

"Now, gentlemen and my lord, if Jennings did not go that way, nor the kitchen-way neither—for he always was too proud for scullery door and kitchen—and if he did not give himself the trouble to unfasten the dining-room or study windows, or to unscrew the iron bars of his own pantry, none of which is likely, gentlemen,—there was but one other way out, and that way was Bridget Quarles's own room. Now—"

"Ah,—that room, that bed, that corpse, that crock!—It is no use, no use," the wretched miscreant added slowly, after his first hurried exclamations; "I did the deed, I did it; guilty, guilty." And, notwithstanding all Mr. Sharp's benevolent interferences, and appeals to judge and jury on the score of monomania, and shruggings-up of shoulders at his client's folly, and virtuous indignation at the evident leaning of the court,—the murderer detailed what he had done. He spoke quietly and firmly, in his usually stern and tyrannical style, as if severe upon himself, for being what?—a man of blood, a thief, a perjured false accuser? No, no; lower in the scale of Mammon's

judgment, worse in the estimate of him whose god is gold; he was now a pauper, a mere moneyless forked animal, a beggared, emptied, worthless, penniless creature: therefore was he stern against his ill-starred soul, and took vengeance on himself for being poor.

It was a consistent feeling, and common with the mercantile of this world; to whom the accidents of fortune are everything, and the qualities of mind nothing; whose affections ebb and flow towards friends, relations, yea, their own flesh and blood, with the varying tide of wealth: whom a luckless speculation in cotton makes an enemy, and gambling gains in corn restore a friend; men who fall down mentally before the golden calf, and offer up their souls to Nebuchadnezzar's idol: men who never saw harm nor shame in the craftiest usurer or meanest pimp, provided he has thousands in the Three per cents; and whose indulgent notions of iniquity reach their climax in the phrase—the man is poor.

So then, with unhallowed self-revenge, Simon rigidly detailed his crimes: he led the whole court step by step, as I have led the reader, through the length and breadth of that terrible night; of the facts he concealed nothing, and the crowded hall of judgment shuddered as one man when he came to his awful disclosure, hitherto unsuspected, unimagined, of that second strangulation; as to feelings, he might as well have been a galvanized mummy, an automaton lay-figure enunciating all with bellows and clapper, for any sense he seemed to have of shame, or fear, or pity; he admitted his lie about the door, complimented Burke on the accuracy of his evidence, and declared Roger Acton not merely innocent, but ignorant of the murder.

This done, without any start or trepidation in his manner as formerly, he turned his head over his left shoulder, and said in a deep whisper, heard all over the court, "And now, aunt Quarles, I am coming; look out, woman, I will have my revenge for all your hauntings: again shall we wrestle, again shall we battle, again shall I throttle you, again, again!"

O most fearful thought,—who knoweth but it may be true? that spirits of wickedness and enmity may execute each other's punishment, as those of righteousness and love minister each

other's happiness! that,—damned among the damned,—the spirit of a Nero may still delight in torturing, and that those who in this world were mutual workers of iniquity may find themselves in the next sworn retributors of wrath? No idle threat was that of the demoniac Simon, and possibly with no vain fears did the ghost of the murdered speed away.

When the sensation of horror, which for a minute delayed the court-business, and has given us occasion to think that fearful thought, when this had gradually subsided, the foreman of the jury turning to the judge said,

"My Lord, we will not trouble your Lordship to sum up; we are all agreed,—Guilty."

One word about Mr. Sharp: he was entirely chagrined; his fortunes were at stake; he questioned whether any one in Newgate would think of him again. To make matters worse, when he whispered for a fee to Mr. Jennings (for he did whisper, however contrary to professional etiquette) that worthy gentleman replied by a significant sneer, to the effect that he had not a penny to give him, and would not if he had: whereupon Mr. Sharp began to coincide with the rest of the world in regarding so impoverished a murderer as an atrocious criminal; then, turning from his client with contempt, he went the length of congratulating Roger on his escape, and actually offered his hand to Ben Burke. The poacher's reply was characteristic: "As you means it kindly, Master Horsehair, I won't take it for an insult: howsomdever, either your hand or mine, I won't say which, is too dirty for shaking. Let me do you a good turn, Master: there 's a bluebottle on your wig; I think as it 's Beelzebub a-whispering in your ear: allow me to drive him away." And the poacher dealt him such a cuff that the barrister reeled again; and instantly afterwards took advantage of the cloud of hair-powder to leave the court unseen.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Sentence and Death.

SILENCE, Silence! shouted the indignant crier, and the episodical cause of Burke *v.* Sharp was speedily hushed.

The eyes of all now concentred on the miserable criminal; for the time everything else seemed forgotten. Roger, Grace, and Ben, grouped together in the midst of many friends, who had crowded round them to congratulate, leaned forward like the rest of that dense hall, as simply thralled spectators. Mr. Grantly lifted up a pair of very moistened eyes behind his spectacles, and looked earnestly on, with his wig, from agitation, wriggled tails in front. The Judge, it was good old Baron Parker, put on the black cap to pronounce sentence. There was a pause.

But we have forgotten Simon Jennings,—what was he about? did that "cynosure of neighboring eyes" appear alarmed at his position, anxious at his fate, or even attentive to what was going on? No: he not only appeared, but was, the most unconcerned individual in the whole court: he even tried to elude utter vacancy of thought by amusing himself with external things about him, and, on Wordsworth's principle of inducing sleep by counting

> "A flock of sheep, that leisurely pass by
> One after one,"

he was trying to reckon, for pleasant peace of mind's sake, how many folks were looking at him. Only see,—he is turning his white stareful face in every direction, and his lips are going a thousand and forty-one, a thousand and forty-two, a thousand and forty-three; he will not hurry it over, by leaving out the "thousand:" alas,—this holiday of idiotic occupation is all the respite now his soul can know.

And the Judge broke that awful silence, saying:

"Prisoner at the bar, you are convicted on your own confession, as well as upon other evidence, of crimes too horrible to speak of. The deliberate repetition of that fearful murder classes you among the worst of wretches whom it has been my duty to condemn; and when to this is added your perjured accusation of an innocent man, whom nothing but a miracle has rescued, your guilt becomes appalling, too hideous for human contemplation. Miserable man, prepare for death, and after that the judgment; yet, even for you, if you repent, there may be pardon; it is my privilege to tell even you, that life and hope are never to be separated, so long as God is merciful, or man may be contrite. The Sacrifice of Him, who died for us all, for you, poor fellow-creature [here the good Judge wept for a minute like a child], for you, no less than for me, is available even to the chief of sinners. It is my duty and my comfort to direct your bloodstained but immortal soul eagerly to fly to that only refuge from eternal misery. As to this world, your career of wickedness is at an end: covetousness has conceived, and generated murder; and murder has even overstept its common bounds, to repeat the terrible crime, and then to throw its guilt upon the innocent. Entertain no hope whatever of a respite; mercy in your case would be sin.

"The sentence of the Court is, that you, Simon Jennings, be taken from that bar to the County Jail, and thence on this day fortnight to be conveyed to the place of execution within the prison, and there by the hands of the common hangman be hanged by the neck——"

At the word "neck," in the slow and solemn enunciation of the Judge, issued a terrific scream from the mouth of Simon Jennings: was he mad after all,—mad indeed? or was he being strangled by some unseen executioner? Look at him, convulsively doing battle with an invisible foe! his eyes start, his face gets bluer and bluer, his hands fixed like griffin's talons clutch at vacancy—he wrestles, struggles, falls!

All was now confusion: even the grave Judge, who had necessarily stopped at that frightful interruption, leaned eagerly over his desk, while barristers and serjeants learned in the law

crowded round the prisoner: "He is dying! air, there, air! a glass of water, some one!"

About a thimbleful of water, after fifty spillings, arrived safely in a tumbler; but as for air, no one in that court had breathed anything but nitrogen for four hours.

He was dying: and three several doctors, hoisted over the heads of an admiring multitude, rushed to his relief with thirsty lancets: apoplexy, oh, of course, apoplexy: and they nodded to each other confidentially.

Yes, he was dying: they might not move him now: he must die in his sins, at that dread season, upon that dread spot. Perjury, robbery, and murder, all had fastened on his soul, and were feeding there like harpies at a Strophadian feast, or vultures ravening on the liver of Prometheus. Guilt, vengeance, death, had got hold of him and rent him, as wild horses tearing him asunder different ways; he lay there gurgling, strangling, gasping, panting: none could help him, none could give him ease; he was going on the dark dull path in the bottom of that awful valley, where Death's cold shadow overclouds it like a canopy; he was sinking in that deep black water, that must some day drown us all,—pray Heaven, with hope to cheer us then, and comfort in the fierce extremity! His eye filmed, his lower jaw relaxed, his head dropped back, he was dying, dying, dying,—

On a sudden he rallied! his blood had rushed back again from head to heart, and all the doctors were deceived;—again he battled and fought, and wrestled, and flung them from him; again he howled, and his eyes glared lightning:—mad? Yes, mad! stark mad! quick, quick, we cannot hold him: save yourselves there!

But he only broke away from them to stand up free;—then he gave one scream, leaped high into the air, and fell down dead in the dock, with a crimson stream of blood issuing from his mouth.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Righteous Mammon.

THUS the crock of gold had gained another victim. Is the curse of its accumulation still unsatisfied? Must more misery be born of that unhallowed store? Shall the poor man's wrongs, and his little ones' cry for bread, and the widow's vain appeal for indulgence in necessity, and the debtor's useless hope for time, more time, and the master's misused bounty, and the murmuring dependants' ever extorted dues,—must the frauds, falsehoods, meannesses and hardnesses of half a century long, concentrated in that small crock,—must these plead still for bloody judgments from on high against all who touch that gold?

No! the miasma is dispelled: the curse is gone: the crimes are expiated. The devil in that jar is dispossessed, and with Simon's last gasp has returned unto his own place. The murderer is dead, and has thereby laid the ghost of his mate in sin, the murdered victim: whilst that victim has long ago paid by blood for her many years of mean domestic pilfering.

And now I see a better angel hovering round the crock: it is purified, sanctified, accepted. It is become a talent from the Lord, instead of a temptation from the devil; and the same coin, which once has been but dull unrighteous mammon, through justice, thankfulness, and piety, shineth as the shekel of the temple. Gratefully, as from God, the rightful owner now may take that gift.

For, gold is a creature of God, representing many excellences: the sweat of honest Industry distils to gold; the hot-spring of Genius congeals to gold; the blessing upon Faithfulness is often showered in gold; and Charities not seldom are guerdoned back with gold. Let no man affect to despise what Providence hath set so high in power. None do so, but the man

who has it not, and who knows that he covets it in vain. Sour grapes, sour grapes,—for he may not touch the vintage. This is not the verdict of the wise: the temptation he may fear, the cares he may confess, the misuse he may condemn: yet will he acknowledge that, received at God's hand, and spent in his service, there is scarcely a creature in this nether world of higher name than Money.

Beauty fadeth; Health dieth; Talents, yea and Graces go to bloom in other spheres:—but when Benevolence would bless, and bless for ages, his blessing is vain, but for money;—when Wisdom would teach, and teach for ages, the teacher must be fed, and the school built, and the scholar helped upon his way by money, righteous money. There is a righteous money, as there is unrighteous mammon: but both have their ministrations here limited to earth and time; the one a fruit of heaven, the other a fungus from below: yet the fruit will bring no blessing, if the Grower be forgotten; neither shall the fungus yield a poison, if warmed awhile beneath the Better Sun. Like all other gifts, given to us sweet, but spoilt in the using, gold may urn to good or ill: Health may kick, like fat Jeshurun in his wantonness; Power may change from beneficence to tyranny; Learning may grow critical in motes until it overlooks the sunbeam; Love may be degraded to an instinct; Zaccheus may turn Pharisee: Religion may cant into the hypocrite, or dogmatize to theologic hate. Even so it is with money: its power of doing good has no other equivalent in this world than its power of doing evil: it is like fire, used for hospitable warmth or wide-wasting ravages; like air, the gentle zephyr, or the destroying hurricane. Nevertheless, all is for this world, this world only; a matter extraneous to the spirit, always foreign, oftentimes adversary: let a man beware of lading himself with that thick clay.

I see a cygnet on the broad Pactolus, stemming the waters with its downy breast; and anon, it would rise upon the wing and soar to other skies; so, taking down that snow-white sail, it seeks for a moment to rest its foot on shore, and thence take flight: alas, poor bird,—thou art sinking in those golden sands,

the heavy morsels clog thy flapping wing,—in vain, in vain, thou triest to rise,—Pactolus chains thee down.

Even such is wealth unto the wisest; wealth at its purest source, exponent of labor and of mind. But, to the frequent fool, heaped with foulest dross,—for the cygnet of Pactolus and those golden sands, read—the hippopotamus wallowing in the Niger, and smothered in a bay of mud.

CHAPTER L.

The Crock a Blessing.

THERE was no will found: it is likely Mrs. Quarles had never made one; she feared death too much, and all that put her in mind of it. So the next of kin, the only one to have the crock of gold, was Susan Scott, a good honest hard-working woman, whom Jennings by many arts had kept away from Hurstley: her husband, a poor thatcher, sadly out of work except in ricking time, and crippled in both legs by having fallen from a hay-stack: and as to their family it was already as long a flight of steps as would reach to an ordinary first floor, with a prospect (so the gossips said) of more in the distance. Susan was a Wesleyan Methodist, many may think, more the pity: but she neither disliked church, nor called it steeple-house: only, forasmuch as Hagglesfield was blessed with a sporting parson, the chief reminders of whose presence in the parish were strifes perpetual about dues and tithes, it is little blame or wonder, if the starving sheep went anywhither else for pasturage and water. So then, Susan was a good mother, a kind neighbor, a religious, humble-minded Christian: is it not a comfort now to know that the gold was poured into her lap, and that she hallowed her good luck by prayers and praises?

I judge it worth while stepping over to Hagglesfield for a couple of minutes, to find out how she used that gold, and made the crock a blessing. Susan first thought of her debts: so, to every village shop around, I fear they were not few, which had kindly given her credit, some for weeks, some for months, and more than one for a year, the happy housewife went to pay in full; and not this only, but with many thanks, to press a little present upon each, for well-timed help in her adversity.

The next thought was near akin to it: to take out of pawn divers valued articles, two or three of which had been her mother's; for Reuben's lameness, poor man, kept him much out of work, and the childer came so quick, and ate so fast, and wore out such a sight of shoes, that, but for an occasional appeal to Mrs. Quarles,—it was her one fair feature this,—they must long ago have been upon the parish: now, however, all the ancestral articles were redeemed, and honor no doubt with them.

Thirdly, Susan went to her minister in best bib and tucker, and humbly begged leave to give a guinea to the school; and she hoped his reverence wouldn't be above accepting a turkey and chine, as a small token of her gratitude to him for many consolations: it pleased me much to hear that the good man had insisted upon Susan and her husband coming to eat it with him the next day at noon.

Fourthly, Susan prudently set to work, and rigged out the whole family in tidy clothes, with a touch of mourning upon each for poor Aunt Bridget, and unhappy brother Simon; while the fifthly, sixthly, and to conclude, were concerned in a world of notable and useful schemes, with a strong resolution to save as much as possible for schooling and getting out the children.

It was wonderful to see how much good was in that gold, how large a fund of blessing was hidden in that crock: Reuben Scott gained health, the family were fed, clad, taught; Susan grew in happiness at least as truly as in girth; and Hagglesfield beheld the goodness of that store, whose curse had startled all Hurstley-cum-Piggesworth.

But also at Hurstley now are found its consequential blessings.

We must take another peep at Roger, and sweet Grace; they, and Ben too, and Jonathan, and Jonathan's master, may all have cause to thank an overruling Providence, for blessing on the score of Bridget's crock. Only, before I come to that, I wish to be dull a little hereabouts, and moralize: the reader may skip it, if he will,—but I do not recommend him so to do.

For, evermore in the government of God, good groweth out of evil: and, whether man note the fact or not, Providence, with

secret care, doth vindicate itself. There is justice done continually, even on this stage of trial, though many pine and murmur: substantial retribution, even in this poor dislocated world of wrong, not seldom overtakes the sinner, not seldom encourages the saint. Encourages? yea, and punishes: blessing him with kind severity; teaching him to know himself a mere bad root, if he be not grafted on his God; proving that the laws which govern life are just, and wise, and kind; showing him that a man's own heart's desire, if fulfilled, would probably tend to nothing short of sin, sorrow, and calamity; that many seeming goods are withheld, because they are evils in disguise; and many seeming ills allowed, because they are masqueraded blessings; and demonstrating, as in this strange tale, that the unrighteous Mammon is a cruel master, a foul tempter, a pestilent destroyer of all peace, and a teeming source of both-worlds' misery.

Listen to the sayings of the Wisest King of men.

"As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more: but the righteous is an everlasting foundation."

"The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead."

"He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch."

"Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right."

"The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright."

"A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just."

CHAPTER LI.

Popularity.

THE storm is lulled: the billows of temptation have ebbed away from shore, and the clouds of Adversity have flown to other skies.

"The winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear upon the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land: the fig-tree putteth forth his green figs, and the blossoms of the vine smell sweetly. Arise, and come away."

Yesterday's trial, and its unlooked-for issue, have raised Roger Acton to the rank of hero. The town's excitement is intense: and the little inn, where he and Grace had spent the night in gratitude and prayerful praise, is besieged by carriages full of lords and gentlemen, eager to see and speak with Roger.

Humbly and reverently, yet preserving an air of quiet self-possession, the laborer received their courteous kindnesses; and acquitted himself of what may well be called the honors of that levee, with a dignity native to the true-born Briton, from the time of Caractacus at Rome to our own.

But if Roger was a demigod, Grace was at the least a goddess; she charmed all hearts with her modest beauty. Back with the shades of night, and the prison-funeral of Jennings, fled envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness: the elderly sisterhood of Hurstley, not to be out of a fashion set by titled dames, hastened to acknowledge her perfections: Calumny was shamed and hid his face; the uncles, aunts, and cousins of the hill-top yonder, were glad to hold their tongues, and bite their nails in peace: farmer Floyd and his Mrs. positively came with

peace offerings, some sausage-meat, elder-wine, jam, and other dainties, which were to them the choicest sweets of life: and as for Jonathan, he never felt so proud of Grace in all his life before; the handsome fellow stood at least a couple of inches taller.

Honest Ben Burke, too, that most important witness, whose coming was as Blucher's at Waterloo and secured the well-earned conquest of the day, though it must be confessed that his appearance was something of the satyr, still, had he been Phœbus Apollo in person, he would scarcely have excited sincerer admiration. More than one fair creature sketched his unkempt head, and loudly wished that its owner was a bandit; more than one bright eye discovered beauty in his open countenance, though a little soap and water might have made it more distinguishable. Well, well, honest Ben, they looked, and wisely looked, at the frank and friendly mind hidden under that rough carcase, and little wonder that they loved it.

Now, to all this stream of hearty English sympathy, the kind and proper feeling of young Sir John resolved to give a right direction. His fashionable friends were gone, except Silliphant and Poynter, both good fellows in the main, and all the better for the absence (amongst others) of that padded old debauchee Sir Richard Hunt, knight of the order of St. Sapphira, that frivolous inanity Lord George Pypp, and that professed gentleman of gallantry Mr. Harry Mynton. The follies and the vices had decamped, had scummed off, so to speak, leaving the more rectified spirits behind them, to recover at leisure, as best they might, from all that ferment of dissipation. So then, there was now neither ridicule, nor interest, to stand in the way of a young and wealthy heir's well-timed schemes of generosity.

Well-timed they were, and Sir John knew it, though calculation seldom had a footing in his warm and heedless heart; but he could not shut his eyes to the fact, that the state of feeling amongst his hereditary laborers was anything but pleasant. In truth, owing to the desperate mal-practices of Quarles and Jennings, perhaps no property in the kingdom had got so ill a name as Hurstley: discontent reigned paramount; incendiary

fires had more than once occurred; threatening notices, very ill-spelt, and signed by one *soi-disant* Captain Blood, had been dropped, in dead of winter, at the doorsills of the principal farmers; and all the other fruits of long-continued penury, extortion, and misgovernment, were hanging ripe upon the bough, a foul and fatal harvest.

Therefore did the kind young landlord, who had come to live amongst his own peasantry, resolve, not more nobly than wisely, to seize an opportunity so good as this, for restoring, by a stroke of generous policy, peace and content on his domain. No doubt, the Baronet rejoiced, as well he might, at the honorable acquittal of innocence, and the mysteries of murder now cleared up; he made small secret of his satisfaction at the doom of Jennings; and, as for Bridget Quarles, by all he could learn of her from tenants' wives, and other female dependants, he had no mind to wish her back again, or to think her fate ill-timed: nevertheless, he was even more glad of an occasion to vindicate his own good feelings; and prove to the world that bailiff Simon Jennings was a very opposite character to landlord Sir John Devereux Vincent.

To carry out his plan, he determined to redress all wrongs within one day, and to commence bringing "honest Roger" in triumph home again to Hurstley; following the suggestion of Baron Parker, to make some social compensation for his wrongs. With this view, Sir John took counsel of the county-town authorities, and it was agreed unanimously, excepting only one dissentient vote,—a rich and radical quaker, one Isaac Sneak, Grocer, and of the body Corporate, who refused to lose one day's service of his shopmen, and thereby (I rejoice to add) succeeded in getting rid of fifteen good annual customers,—it was agreed, then, and arranged that the morrow should be a public holiday. All Sir John's own tenantry, as well as Squire Ryle's, and some of other neighboring magnates, were to have a day's wages without work, on the easy conditions of attending the procession in their smartest trim and of banqueting at Hurstley afterwards. So then, the town band was ordered to be in attendance next morning by eleven at the Swan, a lot of old

election colors were shaken from their dust and cobwebs, the bell-ringers engaged, vasty preparations of ale and beef made at Hurstley Hall,—an ox to be roasted whole upon the terrace, and a plum-pudding already in the caldron of two good yards in circumference,—and all that everybody hoped for that night, was a fine May-day to-morrow.

CHAPTER LII.

Roger at the Swan.

MEANWHILE, eventide came on: the crowd of kindly gentlefolks had gone their several ways; and Roger Acton found himself (through Sir John's largess) at free quarters in the parlor of the Swan, with Grace by his side, and many of his mates in toil and station round him.

"Grace," said her father on a sudden, "Grace, my dear child, come hither." She stood in all her loveliness before him. Then he took her hand, looked up at her affectionately, and leaned back in the old oak chair.

"Hear me, mates and neighbors: to my own girl, Grace, under God, I owe my poor soul's welfare. I have nothing, would I had, to give her in return:" and the old man (he looked ten years older for his six weeks' luck, and care, and trouble), the old man could not get on at all with what he had to say,—something stuck in his throat,—but he recovered and added cheerily with an abrupt and rustic archness, "I don't know, mates, whether after all I can't give the good girl something: I can give her—away! Come hither, Jonathan Floyd; you are a noble fellow, that stood by us in adversity, and are almost worthy of my angel Grace." And he joined their hands.

"Give us thy blessing too, dear father!"

They kneeled at his feet on the sanded floor, in the midst of their kinsfolk and acquaintance, and he, stretching forth his hands like a patriarch, looked piously to heaven, and blest them there.

"Grace," he added, "and Jonathan my son, I need not part with you,—I could not. I have heard great tidings. To-morrow you shall know how kind and good Sir John is: God bless him! and send poor England's children of the soil many masters like him.

"And now, mates, one last word from Roger Acton; a short word, and a simple, that you may not forget it. My sin was love of money: my punishment, its possession. Mates, remember Him who sent you to be laborers, and love the lot He gives you. Be thankful if His blessing on your industry keeps you in regular work and fair wages: ask no more from God of this world's good. Believe things kindly of the gentlefolks, for many sins are heaped upon their heads, whereof their hearts are innocent. Never listen to the counsels of a servant, who takes away his master's character: for of such are the poor man's worst oppressors. Be satisfied with all your lowliness on earth, and keep your just ambitions for another world. Flee strong liquors, and ill company. Nurse no heated hopes, no will-o'-the-wisp bright wishes: rather let your warmest hopes be temperately these,—health, work, wages: and as for wishing, mates, wish anything you will,—sooner than to find a crock of gold."

CHAPTER LIII.

Roger's Triumph.

The steeples rang out merrily, full chime; High Street was gay with streamers; the town band busily assembling; a host of happy urchins from emancipated schools were shouting in all manner of keys all manner of gleeful noises: everybody seemed astir.

A proud man that day was Roger Acton; not of his deserts,—they were worse than none, he knew it; not of the procession,—no silly child was he, to be caught with toy and tinsel; God wot, he was meek enough in self,—and as for other pride, he knew from old electioneerings, what a humbling thing is triumph.

But when he saw from the windows of the Swan, those crowds of new-made friends trooping up in holiday suits with flags, and wands, and corporation badges,—when the band for a commencement struck up the heart-stirring hymn "God save the Queen,"—when the horsemen, and carriages, and gigs, and carts assembled,—when the baronet's own barouche and four dashing up to the door, had come from Hurstley Hall for *him*,—when Sir John, the happiest of the happy, alighting with his two friends, had displaced them for Roger and Grace, while the kind gentlemen took horse and headed the procession,—when Ben Burke (as clean as soap could get him, and bedecked in new attire) was ordered to sit beside Jonathan in the rumble-tumble,—when the cheering, and the merrygoing bells, and the quick-march "British Grenadiers," rapidly succeeding the national anthem,—when all these tokens of a generous sympathy smote upon his ears, his eyes, his heart, Roger Acton wept aloud,—he wept for very pride and joy: proud and glad was he that day of his country, of his countrymen, of his generous landlord, of his gen

tle Grace, of his vindicated innocence, and of God, "who had done so great things for him."

So, the happy cavalcade moved on, horse and foot, and carts and carriages, through the noisy town, along the thronged high road, down the quiet lanes that lead to Hurstley; welcomed at every cottage door with boisterous huzzas, and adding to its ranks at every corner. And so they reached the village, where the band struck up,

> "See the conquering hero comes,
> Sound the trumpets, beat the drums!"

Is not this returning like a Nabob, Roger? Hath not God blest thee through the crock of gold at last, in spite of sin?

There, at the entrance by the milestone, stood Mary and the babes, with a knot of friends around her, bright with happiness; on the top of it was perched son Tom, waving the blue and silver flag of Hurstley, and acting as fugleman to a crowd of uproarious cheerers; and beside it, on the bank, sat Sarah Stack, overcome with joy, and sobbing like a gladsome Niobe.

And the village bells went merrily; every cottage was gay with spring garlands, and each familiar face lit up with looks of kindness; Hark! hark!—"Welcome, honest Roger, welcome home again," they shout: and the patereroes on the lawn thunder a salute; "welcome, honest neighbor,"—and up went at bright noon, Tom Stableboy's dozen of rockets wrapped around with streamers of glazed calico,—"welcome, welcome!"

Good Mr. Evans stood at the door of fine old Hurstley, in wig, and band, and cassock, to receive back his wandering sheep that had been lost: and the school-children, ranged upon the steps, thrillingly sang out the beautiful chaunt, "I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son!'"

Every head was uncovered, and every cheek ran down with tears.

CHAPTER LIV.

Sir John's Parting Speech

THEN Sir John, standing up in the barouche at his own hall door, addressed the assembled multitude:

"Friends, we are gathered here to-day, in the cause of common justice, and brotherly kindness. There are many of you whom I see around me, my tenants, neighbors, or dependants, who have met with wrongs and extortions heretofore, but you all shall be righted in your turn; trust me, men, the old hard times are gone, your landlord lives among you, and his first care shall be to redress your many grievances, paying back the gains of your oppressor."

"God bless you, sir, God bless you!" was the echo from many a gladdened heart.

"But before I hear your several claims in turn, which shall be done to-morrow, our chief duty this day is to recompense an honest man for all that he has innocently suffered. It is five and thirty years, as I find by my books, on this very first of May, since Roger Acton first began to work at Hurstley; till within this now past evil month, he has always been the honest steady fellow that you knew him from his youth: what say you, men, to having as a bailiff one of yourselves, a kind and humble man, a good man, the best hand in the parish in all the works of your vocation, a steady mind, an honest heart,—what say ye all to Roger Acton?"

There was a whirlwind of tumultuous applause.

"Moreover, men, though you all, each according to his measure and my means, shall meet with liberal justice for your lesser ills, yet we must all remember that bailiff Acton here had nearly died a felon's death, through that bad man Jennings and the unlucky crock of gold; in addition, extortion has gone

greater lengths with him, than with any other on the property; I find that for the last twenty years Roger Acton has regularly paid to that monster of oppression who is now dead, a double rent—four guineas instead of forty shillings. I desire as a good master, to make amends for the crimes of my wicked servant; therefore in this bag, Bailiff Acton, is returned to you all the rent you ever paid;" [Roger could not speak for tears;]—"and your cottage, repaired and fitted, with an acre round it, is yours and your children's, rent-free, for ever."

"Huzzah, Huzzah! heaven bless your honor!" roared Ben from the dickey, in a gush of disinterested joy; and then, like an experienced toast-master, he marshalled in due hip, hip, hip order, the shouts of acclamation that rent the air. In an interval of silence, Sir John added,

"As for you, good-hearted fellow, if you will only mend your speech, I'll make you one of my keepers; you shall call yourself licensed poacher, if you choose."

"Blessings on your honor! you've made an honest man o' me."

"And now, Jonathan Floyd, I have one word to say to you, sir. I hear you are to marry our Roger's pretty Grace." Jonathan appeared like a sheep in livery.

"You must quit my service." Jonathan was quite alarmed. "Do you suppose, Master Jonathan, that I can house at Hurstley, before a Lady Vincent comes amongst us to keep the gossips quiet, such a charming little wife as that, and all her ruddy children?"

It was Grace's turn to feel confused, so she "looked like a rose in June," and blushed all over, as Charles Lamb's Astræa did, down to the ankle.

"Yes, Jonathan, you and I must part, but we part good friends: you have been a noble lover; may you make the girl a good and happy husband. Jennings has been robbing me and those about me for years: it is impossible to separate specially my rights from his extortions: but all, as I have said, shall be satisfied: meanwhile, his hoards are mine. I appropriate one half of them for other claimants; the remaining half I give to Grace Floyd as dower. Don't be a fool, Jonathan, and blubber:

look to your Grace there, she's fainting,—you can set up landlord for yourself, do you hear?—for I make yours honestly, as much as Roger found in his now lucky Crock of Gold."

Poor Roger, quite unmanned, could only wave his hat, and—the curtain falls amid thunders of applause.

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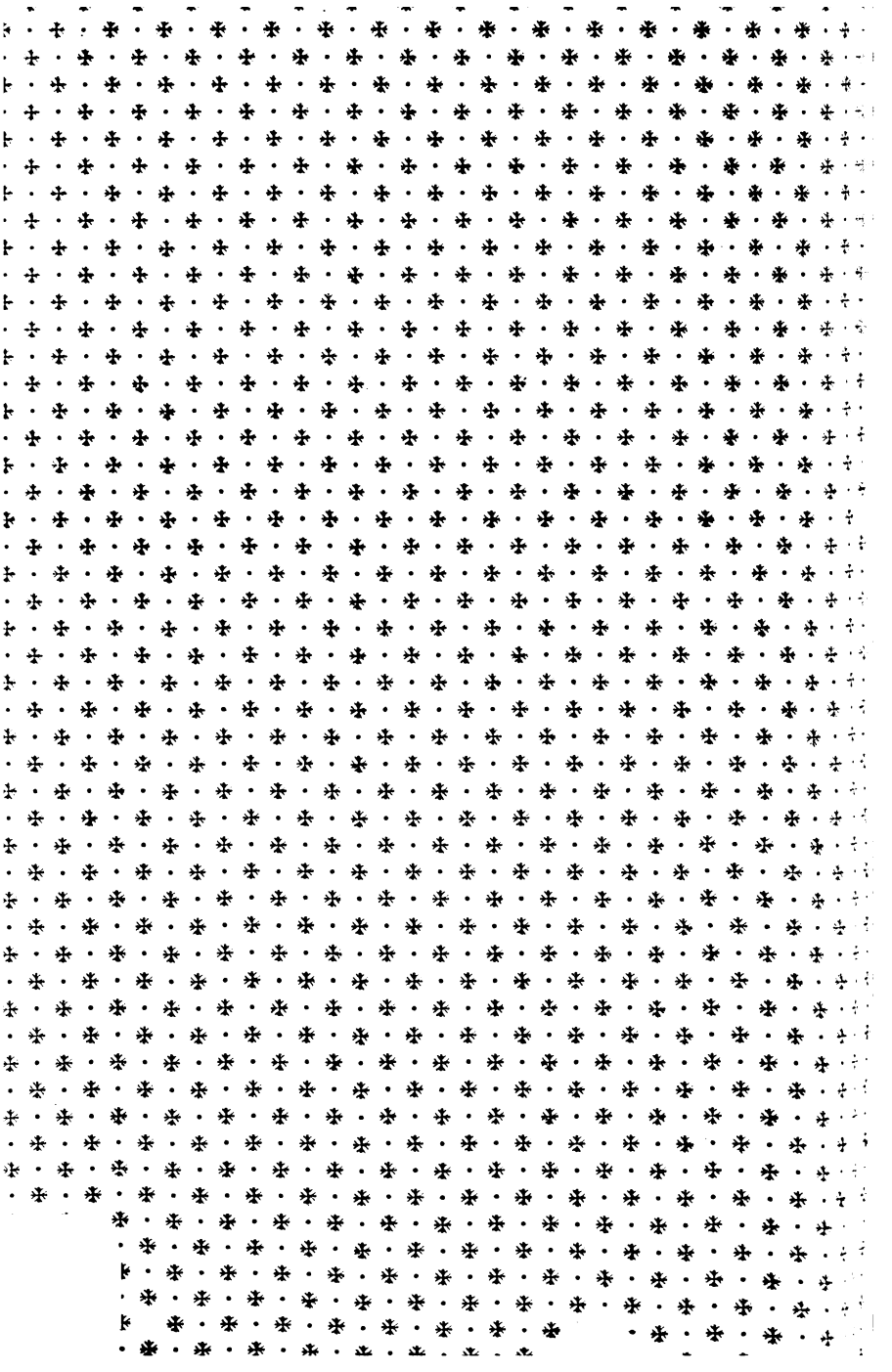

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